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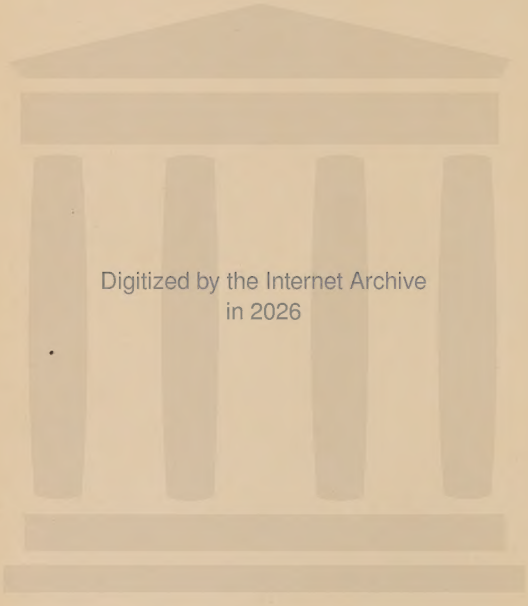
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THE MODERN BOOK OF FRENCH VERSE

IN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS BY
CHAUCER, FRANCIS THOMPSON,
SWINBURNE, ARTHUR SYMONS,
ROBERT BRIDGES, JOHN PAYNE
AND OTHERS

EDITED BY ALBERT BONI

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NOTE

This anthology is more correctly a compilation of translations selected primarily for those who have no means of enjoying French poetry in the original. Expanded from a collection gathered originally for personal pleasure, it is my belief that most of the selections here included are of high poetical merit, fully capable of standing squarely on their own feet as adequate renderings of the original. Where this claim seems extravagant, the reader is asked to accept the selection as one of several that were included to give the volume the proper proportions that an anthology such as this must possess. In such cases, it was deemed better that our poet be inadequately represented than not at all. A translation fairly literal, though lacking in the lyrical quality we should desire, is, at any rate, an aid to the appreciation of the original, and we hope that these versions will lead some readers back to their source.

Acknowledgments are due to many publishers for their generous authorizations in the use of copyrighted material. In particular I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to: Charles Scribner's Sons for the selections from "The Poems of George Meredith" and "The Hermit of Carmel" by George Santayana; B. W. Huebsch for "The Bell of Dawn" by Paul Fort from "The Poets of Modern France" by Ludwig Lewisohn; Doubleday, Page and Company for selections from "The Collected Poems of James Elroy Flecker"; Alfred Knopf for translations from "Lustra" by Ezra Pound; John Lane and Company for many translations by Arthur Symons and Ernest Dowson; Brentano's for Lafcadio Hearn's translation of "Clarimonde" by Theophile Gautier; The Walter Scott Publishing Company for selections from "Contemporary French Poetry" by Jethro Bithell; Thomas Bird Mosher

for innumerable selections taken from "The Bibelot," which has proved a veritable treasure-house for material unobtainable elsewhere.

ALBERT BONI.

August 27, 1919.
"High Orchard,"
Westfield, N. J.

THE MODERN BOOK OF FRENCH VERSE

MODERN BOOK OF FRENCH VERSE

GUILLAUME DE POITIERS (1071-?)

Behold the Meads

BEHOLD, the meads are green again,
The orchard-bloom is seen again,
Of sky and stream the mien again
Is mild, is bright!
Now should each heart that loves obtain
Its own delight.

But I will say no ill of Love,
However slight my guerdon prove:
Repining doth not me behove:
And yet—to know
How lightly she I fain would move
Might bliss bestow!

There are who hold my folly great,
Because with little hope I wait;
But one old saw doth animate
And me assure:
Their hearts are high, their might is great,
Who will endure.

(*H. W. Preston.*)

FROM THE CHANSON DE ROLAND (XIIth CENT.)

Death of Archbishop Turpin

THE archbishop, whom God loved in high degree,
Beheld his wounds all bleeding fresh and free;
And then his cheek more ghastly grew and wan,
And a faint shudder through his members ran.
Upon the battle-field his knee was bent;
Brave Roland saw, and to his succour went,
Straightway his helmet from his brow unlaced,
And tore the shining haubert from his breast;
Then raising in his arms the man of God,
Gently he laid him on the verdant sod.
"Rest, Sire," he cried,—"for rest thy suffering needs."
The priest replied, "Think but of warlike deeds!
The field is ours; well may we boast this strife!
But death steals on,—there is no hope of life;
In paradise, where the almoners live again,
There are our couches spread,—there shall we rest from pain."
Sore Roland grieved; nor marvel I, alas!
That thrice he swooned upon the thick green grass.
When he revived, with a loud voice cried he,
"O Heavenly Father! Holy Saint Marie!
Why lingers death to lay me in my grave?
Beloved France! how have the good and brave
Been torn from thee and left thee weak and poor!"
Then thoughts of Aude, his lady-love, came o'er
His spirit, and he whispered soft and slow,
"My gentle friend!—what parting full of woe!
Never so true a liegeman shalt thou see;—
Whate'er my fate, Christ's benison on thee!
Christ, who did save from realms of woe beneath
The Hebrew prophets from the second death."
Then to the paladins, whom well he knew,
He went, and one by one unaided drew
To Turpin's side, well skilled in ghostly lore;—

No heart had he to smile,—but, weeping sore,
He blessed them in God's name, with faith that he
Would soon vouchsafe to them a glad eternity.

The archbishop, then,—on whom God's benison rest!—
Exhausted, bowed his head upon his breast;—
His mouth was full of dust and clotted gore,
And many a wound his swollen visage bore.
Slow beats his heart,—his panting bosom heaves,—
Death comes apace,—no hope of cure relieves.
Towards heaven he raised his dying hands and prayed
That God, who for our sins was mortal made,—
Born of the Virgin,—scorned and crucified,—
In paradise would place him by his side.

Then Turpin died in service of Charlon,
In battle great and eke great orison;
'Gainst Pagan host alway strong champion;—
God grant to him his holy benison!

(*H. W. Longfellow.*)

MARCABRUN (XIITH CENTURY)

At the Fountain

A FOUNT there is, doth overfling
Green turf and garden walks; in spring
A glory of white blossoming
Shines underneath its guardian tree;
And new-come birds old music sing;
And there, alone and sorrowing,
I found a maid I could not cheer,—

Of beauty meet to be adored,
The daughter of the castle's lord;
Methought the melody outpour'd
By all the birds unceasingly,
The season sweet, the verdant sward,

Might gladden her, and eke my word
Her grief dismiss, would she but hear.

Her tears into the fountain fell;
With sorry sighs her heart did swell;
"O Jezus, King invisible!"
She cried,—"of thee is my distress!
Through thy deep wrong bereft I dwell:
Earth's best have bidden us farewell,
On thee at thine own shrine to wait.

"And my true Love is also gone,
The free, fair, gentle, valiant One;
So what can I but make my moan,
And how the sad desire suppress
That Louis' name were here unknown,
The prayers, the mandates, all undone
Whereby I am made desolate?"

Soon as I heard this plaintive cry,
Moving the limpid wave anigh,
"Weep not, fair maid! So piteously,
Nor waste thy roses!" thus I cried,—
"Neither despair, for He is by
Who brought this leafy greenery,
And He will give thee joy one day."

"Seigneur! I well believe," she said,—
"Of God I shall be comforted
In yonder world when I am dead;
And many a sinful soul beside;—
But now hath He prohibited
My chief delight. I bow my head,—
But heaven is very far away."

(*H. W. Preston.*)

BERNARD DE VENTADOUR (1130-?)

No Marvel Is It

NO marvel is it if I sing
Better than other minstrels all:
For more than they I am Love's thrall,
And all myself therein I fling,—
Knowledge and sense, body and soul,
And whatso power I have beside;
The rein that doth my being guide
Impels me to this only goal.

His heart is dead whence did not spring
Love's odour, sweet and magical;
His life doth ever on him pall
Who knoweth not that blessed thing;
Yea! God, who doth my life control,
Were cruel did he bid me bide
A month, or even a day, denied
The love whose rapture I extol.

How keen, how exquisite the sting
Of that sweet odour! At its call
An hundred times a day I fall
And faint, an hundred rise and sing.
So fair the semblance of my dole,
'Tis lovelier than another's pride:
If such the ill doth me betide,
Good hap were more than I could thole.

Yet haste, kind heaven! the sundering
True swains from false, great hearts from small!
The traitor in the dust bid crawl!
The faithless to confession bring!
Ah! if I were the master sole
Of all earth's treasures multiplied,
To see my Lady satisfied
Of my pure faith, I'd give the whole.

(*H. W. Preston.*)

MARIE DE FRANCE (XIIITH CENTURY)

Song from Chartivel

HATH any loved you well, down there,
Summer or winter through?
Down there, have you found any fair
Laid in the grave with you?
Is death's long kiss a richer kiss
Than mine was wont to be—
Or have you gone to some far bliss
And quite forgotten me?

What soft enamouring of sleep
Hath you in some soft way?
What charmed death holdeth you with deep
Strange lure by night and day?
A little space below the grass,
Out of the sun and shade;
But worlds away from me, alas,
Down there where you are laid.

My bright is vaved and wasted gold,
What is it now to thee—
Whether the rose-red life I hold
Or white death holdeth me?
Down there you love the grave's own green,
And evermore you rave
Of some sweet seraph you have seen
Or dreamt of in the grave.

There you shall lie as you have lain,
Though in the world above,
Another live your life again,
Loving again your love:
Is it not sweet beneath the palm?

Is it not warm day rife
With some long mystic golden calm
Better than love and life?

The broad quaint odorous leaves like hands
Weaving the fair day through,
Weave sleep no burnished bird withstands,
While death weaves sleep for you;
And many a strange rich breathing sound
Ravishes morn and noon:
And in that place you must have found
Death a delicious swoon—

Hold me no longer for a word
I used to say or sing:
Ah, long ago you must have heard
So many a sweeter thing:
For rich earth must have reached your heart
And turned the faith to flowers;
And warm wind stolen, part by part,
Your soul through faithless hours.

And many a soft seed must have won
Soil of some yielding thought,
To bring a bloom up to the sun
That else had ne'er been brought;
And, doubtless, many a passionate hue
Hath made that place more fair,
Making some passionate part of you
Faithless to me down there.

(A. O'Shaughnessy.)

Would I Might Go Far Over Sea

WOULD I might go far over sea,
My Love, or high above the air,
And come to land or heaven with thee,

Where no law is, and none shall be.
Against beholding the most rare
Strange beauty that thou hast for me.

Alas, for, in this bitter land,
Full many a written curse doth stand
Against the kiss thy lips should bear;
Against the sweet gift of thy hands;
Against the knowing that thou art fair,
And too fond loving of thy hair.

(*A. O'Shaughnessy.*)

THE VIDAME DE CHARTRES (12-?)

April

WHEN the fields catch flower
And the underwood is green,
And from bower unto bower
The songs of the birds begin,
I sing with sighing between.
When I laugh and sing,
I am heavy at heart for my sin;
I am sad in the spring
For my love that I shall not win,
For a foolish thing.

This profit I have of my woe,
That I know, as I sing,
I know he will needs have it so
Who is master and king,
Who is lord of the spirit of spring.
I will serve her and will not spare
Till her pity awake,

Who is good, who is pure, who is fair,
  Even her for whose sake
Love hath ta'en me and slain unaware.

O my lord, O love,
  I have laid my life at thy feet;
Have thy will thereof,
  Do as it please thee with it,
  For what shall please thee is sweet.
I am come unto thee
  To do thee service, O Love;
Yet cannot I see
  Thou wilt take any pity thereof,
Any mercy on me.

But the grace I have long time sought
  Comes never in sight,
If in her it abideth not,
  Through thy mercy and might,
  Whose heart is the world's delight.
Thou hast sworn without fail I shall die,
  For my heart is set
On what hurts me, I wot not why,
  But cannot forget
What I love, what I sing for and sigh.

She is worthy of praise,
  For this grief of her giving is worth
All the joy of my days
  That lie between death's day and birth,
  All the lordship of things upon earth.
Nay, what have I said?
  I would not be glad if I could;
My dream and my dread
  Are of her, and for her sake I would
That my life were fled.

Lo, sweet, if I durst not pray to you,
  Then were I dead;
If I sang not a little to say to you,
  (Could it be said)
  O my love, how my heart would be fed;
Ah, sweet, who hast hold of my heart,
  For thy love's sake I live,
Do but tell me, ere either depart,
  What a lover may give
For a woman so fair as thou art.

The lovers that disbelieve,
  False rumors shall grieve
And evil-speaking shall part.

(Algernon Charles Swinburne.)

GUILLAUME DE LORRIS (1230-?)

From the Romaunt of the Rose

WITHIN my twentie yeere of age,
  When that love taketh his courage
Of younge folke, I wente soone
To bed, as I was wont to doone:
And fast I slept: and in sleeping,
Me mette such a swevening,[1]
That liked me wondrous wele:
But in that sweven is never a dele[2]
That it n'is[3] afterward befall,
Right as this dreame woll tell us all.
  Now this dreame woll I rime aright,
To make your heartes gay and light:
For love it prayeth, and also
Commaundeth me, that it be so.
  And if there any aske me,

[1] Dreaming.
[2] Never a bit, nothing at all.
[3] For *ne is*, is not.

Whether that it be he or she,
How this booke which is here
Shall hatte,[4] that I rede[5] you here:
It is the Romaunt of the Rose,
In which all the art of love I close.
The matter faire is of to make:
God graunt me in gree[6] that she it take
For whom that it begonnen[7] is:
And that is she that hath ywis[8]
So mokel prise,[9] and thereto she
So worthie is beloved to be,
That she wel ought, of prise and right,
Be cleped Rose of everie wight.
That it was May me thoughte tho,[10]
It is five yere or more ago,
That it was May, thus dreamed me,
In time of love and jolitie,
That all thing ginneth waxen gay:
For there is neither buske[11] nor hay
In May, that it n'ill[12] shrouded bene,
And it with newe leves wrene:[13]
These woodes eke recoveren grene,
That drie in winter ben to sene,
And the erth waxeth proud withall,
For swote[14] dewes that on it fall,
And the poore estate forget,
In which that winter had it set:
And than[15] become the ground so proude,
That it wol have a newe shroude,
And maketh so queint his robe and faire,
That it had hewes an hundred paire,

[4] Be named.
[5] Advise, explain.
[6] Pleasure, good will; *to take in gree,* to take in good part.
[7] Begun.
[8] Certainly.
[9] Much praise.
[10] Then.
[11] Bush.
[12] For *ne will,* will not.
[13] Covered.
[14] Sweet.
[15] Then.

Of grasse and floures, of Inde and Pers,
And many hewes full divers:
That is the robe I mean ywis,
Through which the ground to praisen is.
The birdes, that han left hir[16] song,
While they han suffred cold full strong,
In wethers grille,[17] and derke to sight,
Ben in May, for the sunne bright,
So glad, that they shew, in singing,
That in hir heart is such liking,
That they mote singen and ben light:
Than doth the nightingale her might
To maken noyse and singen blithe:
Than is blisfull many a sithe,[18]
The chelaundre,[19] and the popingaye:
Than younge folke entenden[20] aye,
For to ben gay and amorous,
The time is then so savorous.[21]
Harde is his heart that loveth nought
In May, whan all this mirth is wrought,
Whan he may on these braunches here[22]
The smalle birdes singen clere
Hir blisfull swete song piteous,
And in this season delitous:
When love affirmeth all thing,
Me thought one night, in my sleeping
Right in my bed full readyly,
That it was by the morrow[23] early,
And up I rose, and gan me cloth,
Anone I wysshe[24] mine hondes[25] both,
A silver needle forth I drow
Out of an aguiler[26] queint ynow,

[16] Their.
[17] Dreadful, horrible.
[18] Time.
[19] Goldfinch.
[20] Listen to, attend.
[21] Sweet, pleasant.
[22] Hear.
[23] In the morning.
[24] Washed.
[25] Hands.
[26] Needle-case.

And gan this needle thread anone,
For out of towne me list to gone,
The sound of birdes for to heare
That on the buskes singen cleare,
In the swete season that lefe is:
With a thred basting my slevis,
Alone I went in my playing,
The smal foules song hearkening,
That payned hem [27] full many a paire
To sing on bowes blossomed faire:
Jolife [28] and gay, full of gladnesse,
Toward a river gan I me dresse,[29]
That I heard renne [30] faste by,
For fairer playeng [31] none saw I
Than playen me by the rivere:
For from an hill, that stood there nere,
Come downe the stream full stiffe and bold,
Clere was the water, and as cold
As any well is, sooth to saine,[32]
And somedele lasse [33] it was than Saine,
But it was straiter, weleaway,
And never saw I, ere that day,
The water that so wele liked me,
And wonder [34] glad was I to se
That lusty [35] place, and that rivere:
And with that water, that ran so clere,
My face I wysshe, tho saw I wele
The bottome ypaved [36] everidele [37]
With gravel, full of stones shene: [38]
The meadowes softe, sote,[39] and grene,
Beet right upon the water side:

[27] Pained themselves, that is, took great pains or trouble.
[28] Joyful.
[29] To address, turn towards.
[30] Run.
[31] Enjoyment, enjoying.
[32] To say the truth.
[33] Somewhat less.
[34] Wonderfully, very.
[35] Pleasant.
[36] Paved.
[37] Entirely, every part.
[38] Bright, beautiful.
[39] Sweet.

Full clere was than the morowe tide,
And full attempre[40] out of drede:[41]
Tho gan I walken thorow the mede,
Downward aye, in my playing,
The rivers side coösting.

(Chaucer.)

JEAN FROISSART (1337-1404)

Rondel

LOVE, love, what wilt thou with this heart of mine?
Naught see I fixed or sure in thee!
I do not know thee,—nor what deeds are thine:
Love, love, what wilt thou with this heart of mine?
Naught see I fixed or sure in thee!

Shall I be mute, or vows with prayers combine?
Ye who are blessed in loving, tell it me:
Love, love, what wilt thou with this heart of mine?
Naught see I permanent or sure in thee!

(H. W. Longfellow.)

ALAIN CHARTIER (1386-1449)

From La Belle Dame Sans Mercy

THE bordes were spred in right little space,
The ladies sat each as hem[1] seemed best,
There were no deadly seruants in the place,
But chosen men, right of the goodliest:
And some there were, perauenture most freshest,
That saw their judges full demure,

[40] Temperate.
[41] Without doubt.
[1] Them.

Without semblaunt, either to most or lest,
Notwithstanding they had hem vnder cure.

Emong all other, one I gan espy,
Which in great thought ful often came and went,
As one that had been rauished vtterly:
In his language not greatly dilligent,
His countenance he kept with great turment,
But his desire farre passed his reason,
For euer his eye went after his entent,
Full many a time, whan it was no season.

To make chere sore himselfe he pained,
And outwardly he fained great gladnesse,
To sing also by force he was constrained,
For no pleasaunce, but very shamefastnesse:
For the complaint of his most heauinesse
Came to his voice, alway without request,
Like as the soune of birdes doth expresse,
Whan they sing loud in frithe or in forrest.

Other there were that serued in the hall,
But none like him, as after mine aduise,[2]
For he was pale, and somwhat lean withall,
His speech also trembled in fearful wise,
And euer alone, but whan he did seruise,
All blacke he ware, and no deuise but plain:
Me thought by him, as my wit could suffise,
His herte was nothing in his own demain.[3]

To feast hem all he did his dilligence,
And well he coud, right as it seemed me,
But euermore, whan he was in presence,
His chere was done, it nolde[4] none other be:
His schoolemaister had such aucthorite,
That, all the while he bode still in the place,
Speake coud he not, but upon her beautie
He looked still with a right pitous face.

[2] Observation.
[3] Control.
[4] For *ne wold*, would not.

With that his head he tourned at the last
For to behold the ladies euerichone,[5]
But euer in one he set his eye stedfast
On her which his thought was most vpon,
For of his eyen the shot[6] I knew anone,
Which fearful was, with right humble requests:
Than to my self I said, by God alone,
Such one was I, or that I saw these jests.

Out of the prease he went full easely
To make stable his heauie countenance,
And wote ye well, he sighed wonderly
For his sorrowes and wofull remembrance:
Than in himselfe he made his ordinance,
And forthwithall came to bring in the messe,
But for to judge his most wofull pennance,
God wote it was a pitous entremesse.[7]

After dinner anon they hem auanced
To daunce aboue the folke euerichone,
And forthwithall, this heauy man he daunced,
Somtime with twain, and somtime with one:
Unto hem all his chere was after one,
Now here, now there, as fell by auenture,
But euer among he drew to her alone
Which he most dread[8] of liuing creature.

To mine aduise good was his purueiance,[9]
Whan he her chose to his maistresse alone,
If that her herte were set to his pleasance,
As much as was her beauteous person:
For who so euer setteth his trust vpon
The report of the eyen, withouten more,
He might be dead, and grauen vnder stone,
Or euer he should his hertes ease restore.

[5] Every one.
[6] Glance.
[7] *Entremet*, a dish served between the courses.
[8] Feared.
[9] Foresight. providence.

In her failed nothing that I coud gesse,
One wise nor other, priuie nor apert,[10]
A garrison she was of all goodlinesse,
To make a frontier for a louers herte:
Right yong and fresh, a woman full couert,
Assured wele of port, and eke of chere,
Wele at her ease withouten wo or smert,
All vnderneath the standerd of dangere.

To see the feast it wearied me full sore,
For heauy joy doth sore the herte trauaile:
Out of the prease I me withdrow therefore,
And set me downe alone behind a traile,[11]
Full of leaues, to see a great meruaile,
With greene wreaths ybounden wonderly,
The leaues were so thicke withouten faile,
That throughout no man might me espy.

To this lady he came full courtesly,
Whan he thought time to dance with her a trace,[12]
Set in an herber,[13] made full pleasantly,
They rested hem fro thens but a little space:
Nigh hem were none of a certain compace,[14]
But onely they, as farre as I coud see:
Saue the traile, there I had chose my place,
There was no more between hem two and me.

I heard the louer sighing wonder sore,
For aye the more the sorer it him sought,
His inward paine he coud not keepe in store,
Nor for to speake so hardie was he nought,
His leech was nere, the greater was his thoght,
He mused sore to conquer his desire:
For no man may to more pennance be broght
Than in his heat to bring him to the fire.

[10] Secret nor public.
[11] Trellis.
[12] Turn, or measure.
[13] Arbour.
[14] Compass, circle, distance.

The herte began to swell within his chest,
So sore strained for anguish and for paine,
That all to peeces almost it to brest,
Whan both at ones so sore it did constraine,
Desire was bold, but shame it gan refraine,
That one was large, the other was full close:
No little charge was laid on him, certaine,
To keepe such werre, and haue so many fose.

Full oftentimes to speak himself he pained,
But shamefastnesse and drede said euer nay,
Yet at the last, so sore he was constrained,
Whan he full long had put it in delay,
To his lady right thus than gan he say,
With dredeful voice, weeping, half in a rage:
"For me was purueyed an vnhappy day,
Whan I first had a sight of your visage!"

(Chaucer.)

CHARLES D'ORLEANS (1391-1465)

Rondel

(To his mistress, to succor his heart that is beleaguered by jealousy.)

STRENGTHEN, my Love, this castle of my heart,
And with some store of pleasure give me aid,
For jealousy, with all them of his part,
Strong siege about the weary tower has laid.
Nay, if to break his bands thou art afraid,
Too weak to make his cruel force depart,
Strengthen at least this castle of my heart,
And with some store of pleasure give me aid.
Nay, let not jealousy, for all his art
Be master, and the tower in ruin laid,
That still, ah, Love, thy gracious rule obeyed.

Advance, and give me succor of thy part;
Strengthen, my Love, this castle of my heart.

(Andrew Lang.)

Spring

(The New-liveried year.—Sir Henry Wotton)

THE year has changed his mantle cold
Of wind, of rain, of bitter air;
And he goes clad in cloth of gold,
Of laughing suns and season fair;
No bird or beast of wood or wold
But doth with cry or song declare
The year lays down his mantle cold.
All founts, all rivers, seaward rolled,
The pleasant summer livery wear,
With silver studs on broidered vair;
The world puts off its raiment old,
The year lays down his mantle cold.

(Andrew Lang.)

Alons au bois le may cueillir

WE'LL to the woods and gather may
Fresh from the footprints of the rain;
We'll to the woods, at every vein
To drink the spirit of the day.
The winds of the spring are out at play,
The needs of spring in heart and brain.
We'll to the woods and gather may
Fresh from the footprints of the rain.

The world's too near her end, you say?—
Hark to the blackbird's mad refrain.
It waits for her, the vast Inane?—
Then, girls, to help her on the way
We'll to the woods and gather may.

(W. E. Henley.)

Dieu Qu'il La Fait

GOD, that mad'st her well regard her,
How she is so fair and bonny;
For the great charms that are upon her
Ready are all folk to reward her.

Who could part him from her borders
When spells are always renewed on her?
God, that mad'st her well regard her,
How she is so fair and bonny.

From here to there to the sea's border,
Dame nor damsel there's not any
Hath of perfect charms so many.
Thoughts of her are of dream's order:
God, that mad'st her well regard her.

(Ezra Pound.)

OLD FRENCH

John of Tours

JOHN of Tours is back with peace,
But he comes home ill at ease.

"Good-morrow, mother." "Good-morrow, son,
Your wife has borne you a little one."

"Go now, mother, go before,
Make me a bed upon the floor.

"Very low your feet must fall,
That my wife hear not at all."

As it neared the midnight toll,
John of Tours give up his soul.

"Tell me now, my mother dear,
What's the crying that I hear?"

"Daughter, it's the children wake
Crying with their teeth that ache."

"Tell me, though, my mother dear,
What's the knocking that I hear?"

"Daughter, it's the carpenter
Mending planks upon the stair."

"Tell me, too, my mother dear,
What is the singing that I hear?"

"Daughter, it's the priests in rows
Going round about our house."

"Tell me then, my mother, my dear,
What's the dress that I should wear?"

"Daughter, any reds or blues,
But the black is most in use."

"Nay, but say, my mother, my dear,
Why do you fall weeping here?"

"Oh, the truth must be said,—
It's that John of Tours is dead."

"Mother, let the sexton know
That the grave must be for two;

"Aye, and still have room to spare,
For you must shut the baby there."

(D. G. Rossetti.)

NORMANDE

Ballade de Marguerite

I AM weary of lying within the chase
When the knights are meeting in the market-place.

Nay, go not thou to the red-roofed town
Lest the hoofs of the war-horse tread thee down.

But I would not go where the Squires ride,
I would only walk by my Lady's side.

Alack, and alack, thou art overbold,
A Forester's son may not eat of gold.

Will she love me the less that my Father is seen
Each Martinmas day in a doublet green?

Perchance she is sewing at tapestrie;
Spindle and loom are not meet for thee.

Ah, if she is working the arras bright
I might ravel the threads by the fire-light.

Perchance she is hunting of the deer,
How could you follow o'er hill and mere?

Ah, if she is riding with the court,
I might run beside her and wind the morte.

Perchance she is kneeling in St. Denis,
(On her soul may our Lady have gramercy).

Ah, if she is praying in lone chapelle,
I might swing the censer and ring the bell.

Come in, my son, for you look sae pale,
The father shall fill thee a stoup of ale.

But who are these knights in bright array?
Is it a pageant the rich folks play?

'Tis the king of England from over sea,
Who has come unto visit our fair countrie.

But why does the curfew toll sae low?
And why do the mourners walk a-row?

O 'tis Hugh of Amiens, my sister's son,
Who is lying stark, for his day is done.

Nay, nay, for I see white lilies clear;
It is no strong man who lies on the bier.

O 'tis old Dame Jeannette that kept the hall,
I knew she would die at the autumn fall.

Dame Jeannette has not that gold-brown hair,
Old Jeannette was not a maiden fair.

O 'tis none of our kith and none of our kin,
(Her soul may our Lady assoil from sin).

But I hear the boy's voice chaunting sweet,
"Elle est morte, la Marguerite."

Come in, my son, and lie on the bed,
And let the dead folk bury their dead.

O mother, you know I loved her true:
O mother, hath one grave room for two?

(Oscar Wilde.)

BRETON

The Dole of the King's Daughter

SEVEN stars in the still water,
And seven in the sky:
Seven sins on the King's daughter,
Deep in her soul to lie.

Red roses are at her feet,
(Roses are red in her red-gold hair)
And O where her bosom and girdle meet
Red roses are hidden there.

Fair is the knight who lieth slain
Amid the rush and reed,
See the lean fishes that are fain
Upon dead men to feed.

Sweet is the page that lieth there,
(Cloth of gold is goodly prey),
See the black ravens in the air,
Black, O black as the night are they.

What do they there so stark and dead?
(There is blood upon her hand)
Why are the lilies flecked with red?
(There is blood in the river sand).

There are two that ride from the south and east,
And two from the north and west,
For the black raven a goodly feast,
For the King's daughter rest.

There is one man who loves her true,
(Red, O red, is the stain of gore),
He hath duggen a grave by the darksome yew,
(One grave will do for four).

No moon in the still heaven,
  In the black water none,
The sins in her soul are seven,
  The sin upon his is one.

(Oscar Wilde.)

MEDIÆVAL NORMAN SONGS

I

FAIR is her body, bright her eye,
  With smiles her mouth is kind to me;
Then, think no evil, this is she
Whom God hath made my only joy.

Between the earth and heaven high
There is no maid so fair as she;
The beauty of her sweet body
Doth ever fill my heart with joy.

He is a knave, nor do I lie,
Who loveth her not heartily;
The grace that shines from her body
Giveth to lovers all great joy.

II

Sad, lost in thought, and mute I go:
  The cause, ah me! you know full well:
  But see that nought thereof you tell,
For men will only laugh at woe—
For men will only laugh at woe.

III

Kiss me then, my merry May,
By the soul of love I pray!
  Prithee, nay! Tell, tell me why?

If with you I sport and play,
My mother will be vexed to-day.
Tell me why, oh tell me why

IV

Before my lady's window gay,
The little birds they sing all day,
The lark, the mavis and the dove;
But the sweet nightingale of May,
She whiles the silent hours away,
Chanting of sorrow, joy, and love.

V

I found at daybreak yester morn,
Close by the nest where she was born,
A tender turtle dove:
Oha! ohé! ohesa, hesa, hé!

She fluttered, but she could not fly;
I heard, but would not heed her cry:
She had not learned to love:
Oha! ohé! ohesa, hesa, hé!

Now she is quiet on my breast,
And from her new and living nest
She doth not seek to rove:
Oha! ohé! ohesa, hesa, hé!

VI

This month of May, one pleasant eventide,
I heard a young girl singing on the green;
I came upon her where the ways divide,
And said: "God keep you maiden from all teen.

"Maiden, the God of love you keep and save,
And give you all your heart desires," I cried.

Then she: "Pray tell me, gentle sir and brave,
Whither you wend this pleasant eventide?"

"To you I come, a lover leal and true,
To tell you all my hope and all my care;
Your love alone is what I seek; than you
No woman ever seemed to me more fair."

VII

In this merry morn of May,
When as the year grows young and green,
Into the wood I went my way,
To say farewell unto my queen.

And when we could no longer stay,
Weeping upon my neck she fell,
Oh, send me news from far away,
Farewell, sweet heart of mine, farewell.

VIII

O Love, my love, and perfect bliss!
God in his goodness grant me this—
I see thee soon again.
Nought else I need to take away
The grief that for thy sake alway
Doth keep me in great pain.

Alas, I know not what to do,
Nor how to get good news and true:
Dear God, I pray to Thee;
If else Thou canst not comfort me,
Of Thy great mercy make that he
Send speedy news to me.

Within my father's garden walls
There is a tree—when April falls
It blossometh alway.

There wend I oft in winter drear,
Yes, and in spring, the winds to hear,
The sweet winds at their play.

IX

Alas, poor heart, I pity thee
For all the grief thou hast and care.
My love I see not anywhere;
He is so far away from me.
Until once more his face I see
I shall be sad by night and day;
And if his face I may not see
Then I shall die most certainly:
For other pleasures have I none,
And all my hope is this alone.
No ease I take by night and day:
O Love, my love, to thee I pray
Have pity upon me!

Dear nightingale of woodland gay,
Who singest on the leafy tree,
Go, take a message I thee pray,
A message to my love from me;
Tell, tell him that I waste away
And weaker grow from day to day.

Ah, God! what pain and grief have we
Who are poor lovers, leal and true:
For every week that we pass through,
Five hundred thousand griefs have we:
One cannot think, or count, or tell
The griefs and pains that we know well!

X

Now who is he on earth that lives,
Who knows or with his tongue can say

What grief to poor lovers it gives
To love with loyal heart alway?

So bitter is their portion, yea,
So hard their part!
But this doth more confound my heart;
Unloved to love, and still to pray!
Thinking thereon I swoon away.

XI

Sweet flower, that art so fair and gay,
Come tell me if thou lovest me.
Think well, and tell me presently:
For sore it irks me, by my fay.

For sore it irketh me alway,
That I know not the mind of thee:
I pray thee, gentle lady gay,
If so thou wilt, tell truth to me.

For I do love thee so, sweet May,
That if my heart thou wert to see,
In sooth I know, of courtesy,
Thou wouldst have pity on me this day.

XII

My love for him shall be
Fair love and true:
For he loves me, I know,
And I love him, pardie!

And for I know that he,
Doth love me so,
I should be all untrue
To love but him, pardie!

XIII

Beneath the branch of the green may
  My merry heart sleeps happily,
  Waiting for him who promised me
To meet me here again this day.

And what is that I would not do
  To please my love so dear to me?
He loves me with leal heart and true,
  And I love him no less, pardie.

Perchance I see him but a day;
  Yet maketh he my heart so free—
  His beauty so rejoiceth me—
That month thereafter I am gay.

XIV

They have said evil of my dear;
Therefore my heart is vexed and drear:
  But what is it to them
If he be fair or foul to see,
Since he is perfect joy to me.

He loves me well: the like do I:
I do not look with half an eye,
  But seek to pleasure him.

From all the rest I choose him here;
I want no other for my dear:
  How then should he displease
Those who may leave him if they please?
  God keep him from all fear.

XV

They lied, those lying traitors all,
Disloyal, hypocritical,

Who feigned that I spake ill of thee.
Heed not their words of charity;
For they are flatterers tongued with gall,
And liars all.

They make the tales that they let fall,
Coining falsehoods, where withal
They swear that I spake ill of thee:
Heed not their lies of charity;
For they are flatterers tongued with gall,
And liars all.

Believe them not, although they call
Themselves thy servants; one and all,
They lie, or God's curse light on me,—
Whatever oaths they swear to thee,
Or were they thrice as stout and tall,
They're liars all.

XVI

O nightingale of woodland gay,
Go to my love and to her tell
That I do love her passing well;
And bid her also think of me,
For I to her will bring the may.

The may that I shall bring will be,
Nor rose nor any opening flower;
But with my heart I will her dower;
And kisses on her lips I'll lay,
And pray God keep her heartily.

XVII

Maid Marjory sits at the castle gate:
With groans and sighs
She weeps and cries:

Her grief it is great.
Her father asks, "Daughter, what is your woe?
Seek you a husband or lord I trow?"
"Let husbands be.
Give my love to me,
Who pines in the dungeon dark below."

"I' faith, my daughter, thou'll long want him;
For he hangs to-morrow when dawn is dim."

"Then bury my corpse at the gallows' feet;
And men will say they were true lovers sweet."

XVIII

Drink, gossips mine! we drink no wine.
They were three wives that had one heart for wine;
One to the other said—We drink no wine!
Drink, gossips mine! we drink no wine.

Drink, gossips mine! we drink no wine.
The varlet stood in jerkin tight and fine
To serve the dames with service of good wine.
Drink, gossips mine! we drink no wine.

Drink, gossips mine! we drink no wine.
These wives they cried—Here's service of good wine!
Make we good cheer, nor stint our souls of wine!
Drink, gossips mine! we drink no wine.

Drink, gossips mine! we drink no wine.
The gallant fills, nor seeketh further sign,
But crowns the cups with service of good wine.
Drink, gossips mine! we drink no wine.

Drink, gossips mine! we drink no wine.
Sinning beginneth, and sweet notes combine
With joyance to proclaim the praise of wine!
Drink, gossips mine! we drink no wine.

Drink, gossips mine! we drink no wine.
For fear of husbands will we never pine;
They are not here to mar the taste of wine.
Drink, gossips mine! we drink no wine.

(John Addington Symonds.)

BALLADS

The Three Captains

ALL beneath the white-rose tree
Walks a lady fair to see,
She is as white as the snows,
She is as fair as the day:
From her father's garden close
Three knights have ta'en her away.

He has ta'en her by the hand,
The youngest of the three—
"Mount and ride, my bonnie bride,
On my white horse with me."

And ever they rode, and better they rode,
Till they came to Senlis town,
The hostess she looked hard at them
As they were lighting down.

"And are ye here by force," she said,
"Or are ye here for play?"
"From out my father's garden close
Three knights me stole away.

"And fain would I win back," she said,
"The weary way I come:
And fain would see my father dear,
And fain go maiden home."

"Oh, weep not, lady fair," said she,
"You shall win back," she said,
"For you shall take this draught from me
Will make you lie for dead."

"Come in and sup, fair lady," they said,
"Come busk ye and be bright;
It is with three bold captains
That ye must be this night."

When they had eaten well and drunk,
She fell down like one slain;
"Now, out and alas, for my bonnie may
Shall live no more again."

"Within her father's garden stead
There are three white lilies;
With her body to the lily bed,
With her soul to Paradise."

They bore her to her father's house,
They bore her all the three,
They laid her in her father's close,
Beneath the white-rose tree.

She had not lain a day, a day,
A day but barely three,
When the may awakes, "Oh, open, father,
Oh, open the door for me.

"'Tis I have lain for dead, father,
Have lain the long days three,
That I might maiden come again
To my mother and to thee."

(*Andrew Lang.*)

The Bridge of Death

THE dance is on the Bridge of Death
And who will dance with me?"
"There's never a man of living men
Will dare to dance with thee."

Now Margaret's gone within her bower
Put ashes in her hair,
And sackcloth on her bonny breast,
And on her shoulders bare.

There came a knock to her bower door,
And blithe she let him in;
It was her brother from the wars,
The dearest of her kin.

"Set gold within your hair, Margaret,
Set gold within your hair,
And gold upon your girdle band,
And on your breast so fair.

"For we are bidden to dance to-night,
We may not bide away;
This one good night, this one fair night,
Before the red new day."

"Nay, no gold for my head, brother,
Nay, no gold for my hair;
It is the ashes and dust of earth
That you and I must wear.

"No gold for my girdle band,
No gold work on my feet;
But ashes of the fire, my love,
But dust that the serpents eat."

* * * * *

They danced across the Bridge of Death,
Above the black water,
And the marriage-bell was tolled in hell
For the souls of him and her.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

LE PÈRE SEVERE

(*King Louis' daughter*)

Ballad of the Isle of France

KING LOUIS on his bridge is he,
He holds his daughter on his knee

She asks a husband at his hand
That is not worth a rood of land.

"Give up your lover speedily,
Or you within the tower must lie."

"Although I must the prison dree,
I will not change my love for thee.

"I will not change my lover fair,
Not for the mother that me bare.

"I will not change my true lover
For friends or for my father dear."

"Now where are all my pages keen,
And where are all my serving men?

"My daughter must lie in the tower alway,
Where she shall never see the day."

. . . . . .

Seven long years are past and gone
And there has seen her never one.

At ending of the seventh year
Her father goes to visit her.

"My child, my child, how may you be?"
"O father, it fares ill with me.

"My feet are wasted in the mold,
The worms they gnaw my side so cold."

"My child, change your love speedily
Or you must still in prison lie."

"'Tis better far the cold to dree
Than give my true love up for thee."

(*Andrew Lang.*)

The Milk White Doe

It was a mother and a maid
That walked the woods among,
And still the maid went slow and sad,
And still the mother sung.

"What ails you, daughter Margaret?
Why go you pale and wan?
Is it for a cast of bitter love,
Or for a false leman?"

"It is not for a false lover
That I go sad to see;
But it is for a weary life
Beneath the greenwood tree.

"For ever in the good daylight
A maiden may I go,
But always on the ninth midnight
I change to a milk white doe.

"They hunt me through the green forest
With hounds and hunting men;
And ever it is my fair brother
That is so fierce and keen."

. . . . . .

"Good-morrow, mother." "Good-morrow, son;
Where are your hounds so good?"
"Oh, they are hunting a white doe
Within the glad greenwood.

"And three times have they hunted her,
And thrice she's won away;
The fourth time that they follow her
That white doe they shall slay."

. . . . . .

Then out and spoke the forester,
As he came from the wood,
"Now never saw I maid's gold hair
Among the wild deer's blood.

"And I have hunted the wild deer
In east lands and in west;
And never saw I white doe yet
That had a maiden's breast."

Then up and spake her fair brother,
Between the wine and bread,
"Behold, I had but one sister,
And I have seen her dead."

"But ye must bury my sweet sister
With a stone at her foot and her head,
And ye must cover her fair body
With the white roses and red."

And I must out to the greenwood;
The roof shall never shelter me;
And I shall lie for seven long years
On the grass below the hawthorn tree.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

A Lady of High Degree

I be pareld most of prise,
I ride after the wild fee.

WILL ye that I should sing
Of the love of a goodly thing,
Was no vilein's may?
'Tis sung of a knight so free,
Under the olive tree,
Singing this lay.

Her weed was of samite fine,
Her mantle of white ermine,
Green silk her hose;
Her shoon were silver gray,
Her sandals flowers of May,
Laced small and close.

Her belt was of fresh spring buds,
Set with gold claps and studs,
Fine linen her shift;
Her purse it was of love,
Her chain was the flower thereof,
And Love's gift.

Upon a mule she rode,
The selle was of brent gold,
The bits of silver made;
Three red rose trees there were
That overshadowed her,
For a sun shade.

She riding on a day,
Knights met her by the way,
They did her grace;
"Fair lady, whence be ye?"
"France it is my country,
I come of a high race.

"My sire is the nightingale,
That sings, making his wail,
  In the wild wood clear;
The mermaid is mother to me,
That sings in the salt sea,
  In the ocean mere."

"Ye come of a right good race,
And are born of a high place,
  And of high degree;
Would to God that ye were
Given unto me, being fair,
  My lady and love to be."

(*Andrew Lang.*)

Lost for a Rose's Sake

I LAVED my hands,
  By the water side;
With the willow leaves
  My hands I dried.

The nightingale sung
  On the bough of the tree;
Sing, sweet nightingale,
  It is well with thee.

Thou hast heart's delight,
  I have sad heart's sorrow
For a false, false maid
  That will wed to-morrow.

'Tis all for a rose,
  That I gave her not,
And I would that it grew
  In the garden plot.

And I would the rose-tree
  Were still to set,
That my love Marie
  Might love me yet.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

OLD FRENCH

My Father's Close

INSIDE my father's close,
  (Fly away, O my heart, away!)
Sweet apple-blossom blows
  So sweet.

Three kings' daughters fair,
  (Fly away, O my heart, away!)
They lie below it there
  So sweet.

"Ah," says the eldest one,
  (Fly away, O my heart, away!)
I think the day's begun
  So sweet."

"Ah," says the second one,
  (Fly away, O my heart, away!)
Far off I hear the drum
  So sweet."

"Ah," says the youngest one,
  (Fly away, O my heart, away!)
It's my true love, my own,
  So sweet."

"Oh, if he fight and win,
  (Fly away, O my heart, away!)
"I keep my love for him,

So sweet:
Oh, let him lose or win,
He hath it still complete."

(D. G. Rossetti.)

FRANÇOIS VILLON (1431-1489)

Ballad of the Gibbet

An Epitaph in the form of a ballad that François Villon wrote of himself and his company, they expecting shortly to be hanged.

BROTHERS and men that shall after us be,
Let not your hearts be hard to us:
For pitying this our misery
Ye shall find God the more piteous.
Look on us six that are hanging thus,
And for the flesh that so much we cherished
How it is eaten of birds and perished,
And ashes and dust fill our bones' place,
Mock not at us that so feeble be,
But pray God pardon us out of His grace.

Listen we pray you, and look not in scorn,
Though justly, in sooth, we are cast to die;
Ye wot no man so wise is born
That keeps his wisdom constantly.
Be ye then merciful, and cry
To Mary's Son that is piteous,
That his mercy take no stain from us,
Saving us out of the fiery place.
We are but dead, let no soul deny
To pray God succor us of His grace.

The rain out of heaven has washed us clean,
The sun has scorched us black and bare,
Ravens and rooks have pecked at our eyne,

And feathered their nests with our beards and hair.
Round are we tossed, and here and there,
This way and that, at the wild wind's will,
Never a moment my body is still;
Birds they are busy about my face.
Live not as we, not fare as we fare;
Pray God pardon us out of His grace.

L'envoy

Prince Jesus, Master of all, to thee
We pray Hell gain no mastery,
That we come never anear tha
And ye men, make no mockery,
Pray God, pardon us out of His grace.

(Andrew Lang.)

Rondel

GOOD-BY, the tears are in my eyes;
Farewell, farewell, my prettiest;
Farewell, of women born the best;
Good-by, the saddest of good-bys.
Farewell, with many vows and sighs
My sad heart leaves you to your rest;
Farewell, the tears are in my eyes;
Farewell, from you my miseries
Are more than now may be confessed,
And most by thee have I been blessed,
Yea, and for thee have wasted sighs;
Good-by, the last of my good-bys.

(Andrew Lang.)

Arbor Amoris

I HAVE a tree, a graft of love,
That in my heart has taken root;
Sad are the buds and blooms thereof,

And bitter sorrow is its fruit;
Yet, since it was a tender shoot,
So greatly hath its shadow spread,
That underneath all joy is dead,
And all my pleasant days are flown,
Nor can I slay it, nor instead
Plant any tree, save this alone.

Ah, yet, for long and long enough
My tears were rain about its root,
And though the fruit be harsh thereof,
I scarcely looked for better fruit
Than this, that carefully I put
In garner, for the bitter bread
Whereon my weary life is fed:
Ah, better were the soil unsown
That bears such growths; but Love instead
Will plant no tree, but this alone.

Ah, would that this new spring, whereof
The leaves and flowers flush into shoot,
I might have succor and aid of Love,
To prune these branches at the root,
That long have borne such bitter fruit,
And graft a new bough, comforted
With happy blossoms white and red;
So pleasure should for pain atone,
Nor Love slay this tree, nor instead
Plant any tree, but this alone.

L'envoy

Princess, by whom my hope is fed,
My heart thee prays in lowlihead
To prune the ill boughs overgrown,
Nor slay Love's tree, nor plant instead
Another tree, save this alone.

(Andrew Lang.)

No, I Am Not As Others Are

NO, I am not, as others are,
Child of the angels, with a wreath
Of planets or of any star.
My father's dead, and lies beneath
The churchyard stone: God rest his breath!
I know that my poor old mother
(And she too knows) must come to death,
And that her son must follow her.

I know that rich and poor and all,
Foolish and wise, and priest and lay,
Mean folk and noble, great and small,
High and low, fair and foul, and they
That wore rich clothing on the way,
Being of whatever stock or stem,
And are coiffed newly every day,
Death shall take every one of them.

Paris and Helen are both dead.
Whoever dies, dies with much pain;
For when his wind and breath are sped
His gall breaks on his heart, and then
He sweats, God knows that sweat of men!
Then shall he pray against his doom
Child, brother, sister, all in vain:
None will be surety in his room.

Death makes him tremble and turn pale,
His veins stretch and his nose fall in,
His flesh grow moist and his neck swell,
Joints and nerves lengthen and wax thin;
Body of woman, that hath been
Soft, tender, precious, smooth and even,
Must thou be spoiled in bone and skin?
Yes, or else go alive to heaven.

(Arthur Symons.)

Villon's Straight Tip to All Cross Coves

SUPPOSE you screeve? or go cheap-jack?
Or fake the broads? or fig a nag?
Or thimble-rig? or knap a yack?
Or pitch a snide? or smash a rag?
Suppose you duff? or nose and lag?
Or get the straight, and land your pot?
How do you melt the multy swag?
Booze and the blowens cop the lot.

Fiddle, or fence, or mace, or mack;
Or moskeneer, or flash the drag;
Dead-lurk a crib, or do a crack;
Pad with a slang, or chuck a fag;
Bonnet, or tout, or mump and gag;
Rattle the tats, or mark the spot;
You can not bank a single stag;
Booze and the blowens cop the lot.

Suppose you try a different tack,
And on the square you flash your flag?
At penny-a-lining make your whack,
Or with the mummers mug and gag?
For nix, for nix the dibbs you bag!
At any graft, no matter what,
Your merry goblins soon stravag:
Booze and the blowens cop the lot.

The Moral

It's up the spout and Charley Wag
With wipes and tickers and what not.
Until the squeezer nips your scrag,
Booze and the blowens cop the lot.

(W. E. Henley.)

The Ballad of Dead Ladies

TELL me now in what hidden way is
Lady Flora the lovely Roman?
Where's Hipparchia, and where is Thais,
Neither of them the fairer woman?
Where is Echo, beheld of no man,
Only heard on river and mere,—
She whose beauty was more than human? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Where's Héloise, the learned nun,
For whose sake Abeillard, I ween,
Lost manhood and put priesthood on?
(From Love he won such dule and teen!)
And where, I pray you, is the Queen
Who willed that Buridan should steer
Sewed in a sack's mouth down the Seine? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

White Queen Blanche, like a queen of lilies,
With a voice like any mermaiden,—
Bertha Broadfoot, Beatrice, Alice,
And Ermengarde the lady of Maine,—
And that good Joan whom Englishmen
At Rouen doomed and burned her there,—
Mother of God, where are they then? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Save with this much for an overword,—
But where are the snows of yester-year?

(*D. G. Rossetti.*)

To Death, of His Lady

DEATH, of thee do I make my moan,
Who hadst my lady away from me,
Nor wilt assuage thine enmity
Till with her life thou hast mine own;
For since that hour my strength has flown.
Lo! what wrong was her life to thee,
Death?

Two we were, and the heart was one;
Which now being dead, dead I must be,
Or seem alive as lifelessly
As in the choir the painted stone,
Death!

(*D. G. Rossetti.*)

His Mother's Service to Our Lady

LADY of Heaven and earth, and therewithal
Crowned Empress of the nether clefts of Hell,—
I, thy poor Christian, on thy name do call,
Commending me to thee, with thee to dwell,
Albeit in nought I be commendable.
But all mine undeserving may not mar
Such mercies as thy sovereign mercies are;
Without the which (as true words testify)
No soul can reach thy Heaven so fair and far.
Even in this faith I choose to live and die.

Unto thy Son say thou that I am His,
And to me graceless make Him gracious.
Sad Mary of Egypt lacked not of that bliss,
Nor yet the sorrowful clerk Theophilus,
Whose bitter sins were set aside even thus
Though to the Fiend his bounden service was.
Oh help me, lest in vain for me should pass

(Sweet Virgin that shalt have no loss thereby!)
The blessed Host and sacring of the Mass.
Even in this faith I choose to live and die.

A pitiful poor woman, shrunk and old,
I am, and nothing learn'd in letter-lore.
Within my parish-cloister I behold
A painted Heaven where harps and lutes adore,
And eke an Hell whose damned folk seethe full sore:
One bringeth fear, the other joy to me.
That joy, great Goddess, make thou mine to be,—
Thou of whom all must ask it even as I;
And that which faith desires, that let it see.
For in this faith I choose to live and die.

O excellent Virgin Princess! thou didst bear
King Jesus, the most excellent comforter,
Who even of this our weakness craved a share
And for our sake stooped to us from on high,
Offering to death His young life sweet and fair.
Such as He is, Our Lord, I Him declare,
And in this faith I choose to live and die.

(*D. G. Rossetti.*)

The Complaint of the Fair Armouress

I

MESEEMETH I heard cry and groan
That sweet who was the armourer's maid;
For her young years she made sore moan,
And right upon this wise she said;
"Ah fierce old age with foul bald head,
To spoil fair things thou art over fain;
Who holdeth me? who? would God I were dead!
Would God I were well dead and slain!

II

"Lo, thou hast broken the sweet yoke
  That my high beauty held above
All priests and clerks and merchant-folk;
  There was not one but for my love
  Would give me gold and gold enough,
Though sorrow his very heart had riven,
  To win from me such wage thereof
As now no thief would take if given.

III

"I was right chary of the same,
  God wot it was my great folly,
For love of one sly knave of them,
  Good store of that same sweet had he;
  For all my subtle wiles, perdie,
God wot I loved him well enow;
  Right evilly handled me,
But he loved well my gold, I trow.

IV

"Though I gat bruises green and black,
  I loved him never the less a jot;
Though he bound burdens on my back,
  If he said, 'Kiss me, and heed it not,'
  Right little pain I felt, God wot,
When that foul thief's mouth, found so sweet,
  Kissed me—Much good thereof I got!
I keep the sin and the shame of it.

V

"And he died thirty year agone.
  I am old now, no sweet thing to see;
By God, though, when I think thereon,
  And of that good glad time, woe's me,

And stare upon my changed body
Stark naked, that has been so sweet,
Lean, wizen, like a small dry tree,
I am nigh mad with the pain of it.

VI

"Where is my faultless forehead's white,
The lifted eyebrows, soft gold hair,
Eyes wide apart and keen of sight,
With subtle skill in the amorous air;
The straight nose, great nor small, but fair,
The small carved ears of shapeliest growth,
Chin dimpling, color good to wear,
And sweet red splendid kissing mouth?

VII

"The shapely slender shoulders small,
Long arms, hands wrought in glorious wise,
Round little breasts, the hips withal
High, full of flesh, not scant of size,
Fit for all amorous masteries;
* * * * *
* * * * *
* * * * *

VIII

"A writhled forehead, hair gone gray,
Fallen eyebrows, eyes gone blind and red,
Their laughs and looks all fled away,
Yea, all that smote men's hearts are fled;
The bowed nose, fallen from goodlihead;
Foul flapping ears like water-flags;
Peaked chin, and cheeks all waste and dead,
And lips that are two skinny rags:

IX

"Thus endeth all the beauty of us.
The arms made short, the hands made lean,
The shoulders bowed and ruinous,
The breasts, alack! all fallen in;
The flanks too, like the breasts, grown thin;
* * * * *
For the lank thighs, no thighs but skin,
They are specked with spots like sausage-meat.

X

"So we make moan for the old sweet days,
Poor old light women, two or three
Squatting above the straw-fire's blaze,
The bosom crushed against the knee,
Like fagots on a heap we be,
Round fires soon lit, soon quenched and done;
And we were once so sweet, even we!
Thus fareth many and many an one."

(A. C. Swinburne.)

A Double Ballad of Good Counsel

NOW take your fill of love and glee,
And after balls and banquets hie;
In the end ye'll get no good for fee,
But just heads broken by and by;
Light loves make beasts of men that sigh;
They changed the faith of Solomon,
And left not Samson lights to spy;
Good luck has he that deals with none!

Sweet Orpheus, lord of minstrelsy,
For this with flute and pipe came nigh
The danger of the dog's heads three

That ravening at hell's door doth lie;
Fain was Narcissus, fair and shy,
For love's love lightly lost and won,
In a deep well to drown and die;
Good luck has he that deals with none!

Sardana, flower of chivalry,
Who conquered Crete with horn and cry,
For this was fain a maid to be
And learn with girls the thread to ply;
King David, wise in prophecy,
Forgot the fear of God for one
Seen washing either shapely thigh;
Good luck has he that deals with none!

For this did Amnon, craftily
Feigning to eat of cakes of rye,
Deflower his sister fair to see,
Which was foul incest; and hereby
Was Herod moved, it is no lie,
To lop the head of Baptist John
For dance and jig and psaltery;
Good luck has he that deals with none!

Next of myself I tell, poor me,
How thrashed like clothes at wash was I
Stark naked, I must needs agree;
Who made me eat so sour a pie
But Katherine of Vaucelles? thereby
Noé took third part of that fun;
Such wedding-gloves are ill to buy;
Good luck has he that deals with none!

But for that young man fair and free
To pass those young maids lightly by,
Nay, would you burn him quick, not he;
Like broom-horsed witches though he fry,
They are sweet as civet in his eye;

But trust them, and you're fooled anon;
For white or brown, and low or high,
Good luck has he that deals with none!

(A. C. Swinburne.)

Fragment of Death

AND Paris be it or Helen dying,
Who dies soever, dies with pain.
He that lacks breath and wind for sighing,
His gall bursts on his heart; and then
He sweats, God knows what sweat! again,
No man may ease him of his grief;
Child, brother, sister, none were fain
To bail him thence for his relief.

Death makes him shudder, swoon, wax pale,
Nose bend, veins stretch, and breath surrender,
Neck swell, flesh soften, joints that fail
Crack their strained nerves and arteries slender.
O woman's body found so tender,
Smooth, sweet, so precious in men's eyes,
Must thou too bear such count to render?
Yes; or pass quick into the skies.

(A. C. Swinburne.)

Ballad of the Lords of Old Time

(After the former argument)

WHAT more? Where is the third Calixt,
Last of that name now dead and gone,
Who held four years the Papalist?
Alfonso king of Aragon,
The gracious lord, duke of Bourbon,
And Arthur, duke of old Britaine?

And Charles the Seventh, that worthy one?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

The Scot too, king of mount and mist,
With half his face vermilion,
Men tell us, like an amethyst
From brow to chin that blazed and shone;
The Cypriote king of old renown,
Alas! and that good king of Spain,
Whose name I cannot think upon?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

No more to say of them I list;
'Tis all but vain, all dead and done:
For death may no man born resist,
Nor make appeal when death comes on.
I make yet one more question;
Where's Lancelot, king of far Bohain?
Where's he whose grandson called him son?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

Where is Guesclin, the good Breton?
The lord of the eastern mountain-chain,
And the good late duke of Alençon?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

(A. C. Swinburne.)

Ballad of the Women of Paris

ALBEIT the Venice girls get praise
For their sweet speech and tender air,
And though the old women have wise ways
Of chaffering for amorous ware,
Yet at my peril dare I swear,
Search Rome, where God's grace mainly tarries,
Florence and Savoy, everywhere,
There's no good girl's lip out of Paris.

The Naples women, as folk prattle,
  Are sweetly spoken and subtle enough:
German girls are good at tattle,
  And Prussians make their boast thereof;
  Take Egypt for the next remove,
Or that waste land the Tartar harries,
  Spain or Greece, for the matter of love,
There's no good girl's lip out of Paris.

Breton and Swiss know nought of the matter,
  Gascony girls or girls of Toulouse;
Two fishwomen with a half-hour's chatter
  Would shut them up by threes and twos;
  Calais, Lorraine, and all their crews,
(Names enow the mad song marries)
  England and Picardy, search them and choose,
There's no good girl's lip out of Paris.

Prince, give praise to our French ladies
  For the sweet sound their speaking carries;
'Twixt Rome and Cadiz many a maid is,
  But no good girl's lip out of Paris.

(A. C. Swinburne.)

Ballad Written for a Bridegroom

Which Villon gave to a gentleman newly married to send to his wife whom he had won with the sword.

AT daybreak, when the falcon claps his wings,
  No whit for grief, but noble heart and high
With loud glad noise he stirs himself and springs,
  And takes his meat and toward his lure draws nigh;
  Such good I wish you! Yea, and heartily
I am fired with hope of true love's meed to get;
  Know that Love writes it in his book; for why,
This is the end for which we twain are met.

Mine own heart's lady with no gainsayings
You shall be always wholly till I die;
And in my right against all bitter things
Sweet laurel with fresh rose its force shall try;
Seeing reason wills not that I cast love by
(Nor here with reason shall I chide or fret)
Nor cease to serve, but serve more constantly;
This is the end for which we twain are met.

And, which is more, when grief about me clings
Through Fortune's fit or fume of jealousy,
Your sweet kind eye beats down her threatenings
As wind doth smoke; such power sits in your eye.
Thus in your field my seed of harvestry
Thrives, for the fruit is like me that I set;
God bids me tend it with good husbandry;
This is the end for which we twain are met.

Princess, give ear to this my summary;
That heart of mine your heart's love should forget,
Shall never be: like trust in you put I:
This is the end for which we twain are met.

(A. C. Swinburne.)

Ballad Against the Enemies of France

MAY he fall in with beasts that scatter fire,
Like Jason, when he sought the fleece of gold,
Or change from man to beast three years entire,
As King Nebuchadnezzar did of old;
Or else have times as shameful and as bad
As Trojan folk for ravished Helen had;
Or gulfed with Proserpine and Tantalus
Let hell's deep fen devour him dolorous,
With worse to bear than Job's worst sufferance,
Bound in his prison-maze with Dædalus,
Who could wish evil to the state of France!

May he four months, like bitterns in the mire,
Howl with head downmost in the lake-springs cold
Or to bear harness like strong bulls for hire
To the Great Turk for money down be sold;
Or thirty years like Magdalen live sad,
With neither wool nor web of linen clad;
Drown like Narciss', or swing down pendulous
Like Absalom with locks luxurious,
Or liker Judas fallen to reprobance;
Or find such death as Simon sorcerous,
Who could wish evil to the state of France!

May the old times come of fierce Octavian's ire,
And in his belly molten coin be told;
May he like Victor in the mill expire,
Crushed between moving millstones on him rolled,
Or in deep sea drenched breathless, more adrad
Than in the whale's bulk Jonas, when God bade:
From Phœbus' light, from Juno's treasure-house
Driven, and from joys of Venus amorous,
And cursed of God most high to the utterance,
As was the Syrian king Antiochus,
Who could wish evil to the state of France!

Envoy

Prince, may the bright-winged brood of Æolus
To sea-king Glaucus' wild wood cavernous
Bear him bereft of peace and hope's least glance,
For worthless is he to get good of us,
Who could wish evil to the state of France!

(A. C. Swinburne.)

The Dispute of the Heart and Body of François Villon

WHO is this I hear?—Lo, this is I, thine heart,
That holds on merely now by a slender string.
Strength fails me, shape and sense are rent apart,

The blood in me is turned to a bitter thing,
Seeing thee skulk here like a dog shivering.—
Yea, and for what?—For that thy sense found sweet.—
What irks it thee?—I feel the sting of it.—
Leave me at peace.—Why?—Nay now, leave me at peace;
I will repent when I grow ripe in wit.—
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

What are thou, trow?—A man worth praise perfay.—
This is thy thirtieth year of wayfaring.—
'Tis a mule's age.—Art thou a boy still?—Nay.—
Is it hot lust that spurs thee with its sting,
Grasping thy throat? Know'st thou not anything?—
Yea, black and white, when milk is specked with flies,
I can make out.—No more?—Nay, in no wise.
Shall I begin again the count of these?—
Thou art undone.—I will make shift to rise.—
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

I have the sorrow of it, and thou the smart.
Wert thou a poor mad fool or weak of wit,
Then might'st thou plead this pretext with thine heart;
But if thou know not good from evil a whit,
Either thy head is hard as stone to hit,
Or shame, not honor, gives thee most content.
What canst thou answer to this argument?—
When I am dead I shall be well at ease.—
God! what good luck!—Thou art over eloquent.—
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

Whence is this ill?—From sorrow and not from sin.
When Saturn packed my wallet up for me
I well believe he put these ills therein.—
Fool, wilt thou make thy servant lord of thee?
Hear now the wise king's counsel; thus saith he;
All power upon the stars a wise man hath;
There is no planet that shall do him scathe.—
Nay, as they made me I grow and I decrease.—

What say'st thou?—Truly this is all my faith.—
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

Wouldst thou live still?—God help me that I may!—
Then thou must—What? turn penitent and pray?—
Read always—What?—Grave words and good to say;
Leave off the ways of fools, lest they displease.—
Good; I will do it.—Wilt thou remember?—Yea.—
Abide not till there come an evil day.
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.

(A. C. Swinburne.)

Epistle in Form of a Ballad to His Friends

HAVE pity, pity, friends, have pity on me,
Thus much at least, may it please you, of your grace!
I lie not under hazel or hawthorn-tree
Down in this dungeon ditch, mine exile's place
By leave of God and fortune's foul disgrace.
Girls, lovers, glad young folk and newly wed,
Jumpers and jugglers, tumbling heel o'er head,
Swift as a dart, and sharp as needle-ware,
Throats clear as bells that ring the kine to shed,
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?

Singers that sing at pleasure, lawlessly,
Light, laughing, gay of word and deed, that race
And run like folk light-witted as ye be
And have in hand nor current coin nor base,
Ye wait too long, for now he's dying apace.
Rhymers of lays and roundels sung and read,
Ye'll brew him broth too late when he lies dead.
Nor wind nor lightning, sunbeam nor fresh air,
May pierce the thick wall's bound where lies his bed;
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?

O noble folk from tithes and taxes free,
Come and behold him in this piteous case,

Ye that nor king nor emperor holds in fee,
But only God in heaven; behold his face
Who needs must fast, Sundays and holidays,
Which makes his teeth like rakes; and when he hath fed
With never a cake for banquet but dry bread,
Must drench his bowels with much cold watery fare,
With board nor stool, but low on earth instead;
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?

Princes afore-named, old and young foresaid,
Get me the king's seal and my pardon sped,
And hoist me in some basket up with care:
So swine will help each other ill bested,
For where one squeaks they run in heaps ahead.
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?
(A. C. Swinburne.)

The Epitaph in Form of a Ballad

Which Villon made for himself and his comrades, expecting to be hanged along with them.

MEN, brother men, that after us yet live,
Let not your hearts too hard against us be;
For if some pity of us poor men ye give,
The sooner God shall take of you pity.
Here are we five or six strung up, you see,
And here the flesh that all too well we fed
Bit by bit eaten and rotten, rent and shred,
And we the bones grow dust and ash withal;
Let no man laugh at us discomforted,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

If we call on you, brothers, to forgive,
Ye should not hold our prayer in scorn, though we
Were slain by law; ye know that all alive
Have not wit alway to walk righteously;
Make therefore intercession heartily

With him that of a virgin's womb was bred,
That his grace be not as a dry well-head
For us, nor let hell's thunder on us fall;
We are dead; let no man harry or vex us dead,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

The rain has washed and laundered us all five,
And the sun dried and blackened; yea, perdie,
Ravens and pies with beaks that rend and rive
Have dug our eyes out, and plucked off for fee
Our beards and eyebrows; never we are free,
Not once, to rest; but here and there still sped,
Drive at its wild will by the wind's change led,
More pecked of birds than fruits on garden-wall;
Men, for God's love, let no gibe here be said,
But pray to God that He forgive us all.

Prince Jesus, that of all art lord and head,
Keep us, that hell be not our bitter bed;
We have nought to do in such a master's hall.
Be not ye therefore of our fellowhead,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

(A. C. Swinburne.)

MELLIN DE SAINT-GELAIS (1491-1558)

The Sonnet of the Mountain

WHEN from afar these mountain tops I view,
I do but mete mine own distress thereby:
High is their head, and my desire is high;
Firm is their foot, my faith is certain, too.

E'en as the winds about their summits blue,
From me, too, breaks betimes the wistful sigh;
And as from them the brooks and streamlets hie,
So from mine eyes the tears run down anew.

A thousand flocks upon them feed and stray;
As many loves within me see the day,
And all my heart for pasture ground divide.

No fruit have they, my lot as fruitless is;
And 'twixt us now nought diverse is but this—
In them the snows, in me the fires abide.

(Austin Dobson.)

CLEMENT MAROT (1495-1544)

The Posy Ring

THIS on thy posy-ring I've writ:
"True Love and Faith"
For, failing Love, Faith droops her head,
And lacking faith, why, love is dead
And's but a wraith.
But Death is stingless where they've lit
And stayed, whose names hereon I've writ.

(Ford Madox Hueffer.)

A Love-Lesson

A SWEET "No! no!" with a sweet smile beneath
Becomes an honest girl,—I'd have you learn it;
As for plain, "Yes!" it may be said, i' faith,
Too plainly and too soft,—pray, well discern it!

Not that I'd have my pleasure incomplete,
Or lose the kiss for which my lips beset you;
But that in suffering me to take it, sweet!
I'd have you say—"No! no! I will not let you!"

(Leigh Hunt.)

Madame d'Albert's Laugh

YES! that fair neck, too beautiful by half,
Those eyes, that voice, that bloom, all do her honor;
Yet, after all, that little giddy laugh
Is what, in my mind, sits the best upon her.

Good God! 'twould make the very streets and ways,
Through which she passes, burst into a pleasure!
Did melancholy come to mar my days
And kill me in the lap of too much leisure,
No spell were wanting, from the dead to raise me,
But only that sweet laugh wherewith she slays me.

(Leigh Hunt.)

JACQUES TAHUREAU (1527-1555)

Shadows of His Lady

WITHIN the sand of what far river lies
The gold that gleams in tresses of my Love?
What highest circle of the Heavens above
Is jeweled with such stars as are her eyes?
And where is the rich sea whose coral vies
With her red lips, that cannot kiss enough?
What dawn-lit garden knew the rose, whereof
The fled soul lives in her cheeks' rosy guise?

What Parian marble that is loveliest,
Can make the whiteness of her brow and breast?
When drew she breath from the Sabæan glade?
Oh, happy rock and river, sky and sea,
Gardens and glades Sabæan, all that be
The far-off splendid semblance of my maid.

(Andrew Lang.)

Moonlight

THE high Midnight was garlanding her head
With many a shining star in shining skies,
And, of her grace, a slumber on mine eyes,
And, after sorrow, quietness was shed.
Far in dim fields cicalas jargoned
A thin shrill clamor of complaints and cries;
And all the woods were pallid, in strange wise,
With pallor of the sad moon overspread.

Then came my lady to that lonely place,
And, from her palfrey stooping, did embrace
And hang upon my neck, and kissed me over;
Wherefore the day is far less dear than night,
And sweeter is the shadow than the light,
Since night has made me such a happy lover.

(Andrew Lang.)

JEAN PASSERAT (1534-1602)

The Lover and the Grasshoppers

SINCE, far away from towns and from the human race,
I've wandered here to this sad, solitary place,
Where, grasshoppers, I hear nought but your songs, that make
The bushes and the grass with their shrill music quake,
And since your life with mine doth much in common share,
Let us, I pray, our woes and our defaults compare.
You have but voice; and I, alike to you therein,
But slow and feeble speech possess, for that chagrin
Doth waste and wither me and on such wise bejade
That I am well-nigh nought except a walking shade.
The pilgrim knows for sure that hotter weather's nigh,
When you, among the meads, your voices raise on high;
And 'tis a certain sigh that ardent is my flame,
My lady's cruelties when I aloud proclaim.

Right plaintively I've sung a thousand times in vain;
But she respondeth not to her tormented swain;
And 'tis the like with you, for all of them are dumb.
You live upon the dews, that, bead on pearly bead,
The flowers and grasses store, and I, on tears I feed:
These are the meat and drink I feed on day and night.
Fate hath foreordered you to have a feeble sight.
Would God that I had never looked upon the skies!
Then had I never drunk Love's poison from her eyes.
The folk, that dwell beneath Aurora's bed, the sea,
Inhuman feed on you; and Love devoureth me.
My flesh and nerves and bones, my sinews and my skin,
He still in pieces rends, that cruel mannikin!
You have no tongue; and me right treacherously mine
Abandons in my need, as oft as I incline
To tell my fair my case and prove if love and truth,
Long, constant and unflecked, will in her sight find ruth.
These boughs' and bushes' shade, though little, you defends
Against the burning rays that Phœbus hither sends.
Poor I, alack! within I burn for wan desire
And eke, for the noon-heat, without I'm all afire.
Nay, will or nill, to town my steps I must retrace.
So, grasshoppers, farewell! Farewell, ye lovesome race
Of great Laomedon![1] The herald of the sun,
Your bride,[2] with vermeil hands that cleaves the darkness dun,
Weeping her Memnon slain[3] and cursing arms and war,
With her most dulcet tears bedew you evermore!

(John Payne.)

Canzonet to His Mistress

SWEETHEART, thy beauty's on the wane:
The fruit of lusty youth, we twain
Together, let us cull, my fair:
Or e'er th' occasion pass us by,

[1] Tithonus, son of Laomedon, king of Troy, was changed into a grasshopper.
[2] Eos, the Dawn.
[3] Memnon, son of Eos and Tithonus, was slain by Achilles during the siege of Troy.

Our wishes let us satisfy;
For beauty is no keeping-pear.

Old age, the enemy of ease,
Soon makes us wither, as the breeze,
That sheds abroad the full-blown rose.
Love but with loving is repaid:
Love, then, as thou art loved, sweet maid,
Nor fear discovery to foes.

If thou of scandal frighted art,
None better knows than I, sweetheart,
To hide an amorous emprise;
A huntsman dumb am I and true;
And when I have what I ensue,
I never halloo o'er the prize.

(John Payne.)

Love in May

OFF with sleep, love, up from bed,
This fair morn;
See, for our eyes the rosy red
New dawn is born;
Now that skies are glad and gay
In this gracious month of May,
Love me, sweet;
Fill my joy in brimming measure;
In this world he hath no pleasure
That will none of it.

Come, love, through the woods of spring,
Come walk with me;
Listen, the sweet birds jargoning
From tree to tree.
List and listen, over all
Nightingale most musical
That ceases never;

Grief begone, and let us be
For a space as glad as he;
Time's flitting ever.

Old Time, that loves not lovers, wears
Wings swift in flight;
All our happy life he bears
Far in the night.
Old and wrinkled on a day,
Sad and weary shall you say,
"Ah, fool was I,
That took no pleasure in the grace
Of the flower that from my face
Time has seen die."

Leave then sorrow, teen, and tears
Till we be old;
Young we are, and of our years
Till youth be cold.
Pluck the flower; while Spring is gay
In this happy month of May
Love me, love;
Fill our joy in brimming measure;
In this world he hath no pleasure
That will none thereof.

(Andrew Lang.)

PIERRE DE RONSARD (1524-1585)

Fragment of a Sonnet

NATURE withheld Cassandra in the skies,
For more adornment, a full thousand years;
She took their cream of Beauty, fairest dies,
And shaped and tinted her above all Peers:
Meanwhile Love kept her dearly with his wings,
And underneath their shadow filled her eyes
With such a richness that the cloudy Kings

Of high Olympus uttered slavish sighs.
When from the Heavens I saw her first descend,
My heart took fire, and only burning pains,
They were my pleasures—they my Life's sad end;
Love poured her beauty into my warm veins.

(John Keats.)

Roses

I SEND you here a wreath of blossoms blown,
And woven flowers at sunset gathered,
Another dawn had seen them ruined, and shed
Loose leaves upon the grass at random strown.
By this, their sure example, be it known,
That all your beauties, now in perfect flower,
Shall fade as these, and wither in an hour,
Flowerlike, and brief of days, as the flower sown.

Ah, time is flying, lady,—time is flying;
Nay, 'tis not time that flies but we that go,
Who in short space shall be in churchyard lying,
And of our loving parley none shall know,
Nor any man consider what we were;
Be therefore kind, my love, whilst thou art fair.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

The Rose

SEE, Mignonne, hath not the Rose,
That this morning did unclose
Her purple mantle to the light,
Lost before the day be dead,
The glory of her raiment red,
Her color, bright as yours is bright?

Ah, Mignonne, in how few hours
The petals of her purple flowers

All have faded, fallen, died;
Sad Nature, mother ruinous,
That seest thy fair child perish thus
'Twixt matin song and even-tide.

Hear me, my darling, speaking sooth,
Gather the fleet flower of your youth,
Take ye your pleasure at the best;
Be merry ere your beauty flit,
For length of days will tarnish it
Like roses that were loveliest.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

To the Moon

HIDE this one night thy crescent, kindly Moon;
So shall Endymion faithful prove, and rest
Loving and unawakened on thy breast;
So shall no foul enchanter importune
Thy quiet course; for now the night is boon,
And through the friendly night unseen I fare,
Who dread the face of foemen unaware,
And watch of hostile spies in the bright noon.
Thou knowest, Moon, the bitter power of Love;
'Tis told how shepherd Pan found ways to move,
For little price, thy heart; and of your grace,
Sweet stars, be kind to this not alien fire,
Because on earth ye did not scorn desire,
Bethink ye, now ye hold your heavenly place.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

To His Young Mistress

FAIR flower of fifteen springs, that still
Art scarcely blossomed from the bud,
Yet hast such store of evil will,

A heart so full of hardihood,
Seeking to hide in friendly wise
The mischief of your mocking eyes.

If you have pity, child, give o'er,
Give back the heart, you stole from me,
Pirate, setting so little store
On this your captive from Love's sea,
Holding his misery for gain,
And making pleasure of his pain.

Another, not so fair of face,
But far more pitiful than you,
Would take my heart, if of his grace,
My heart would give her of Love's due;
And she shall have it, since I find
That you are cruel and unkind.

Nay, I would rather that I died,
Within your white hands prisoning,
Would rather that it still abide
In your ungentle comforting,
Than change its faith, and seek to her
That is more kind, but not so fair.

(Andrew Lang.)

Deadly Kisses

AH, take these lips away; no more,
No more such kisses give to me.
My spirit faints for joy; I see
Through mists of death the dreamy shore,
And meadows by the water-side,
Where all about the Hollow Land
Fare the sweet singers that have died,
With their lost ladies, hand in hand;
Ah, Love, how fireless are their eyes,

How pale their lips that kiss and smile.
So mine must be in little while
If thou wilt kiss me in such wise.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

Of His Lady's Old Age

WHEN you are very old, at evening
You'll sit and spin beside the fire, and say,
Humming my songs, "Ah well, ah well-a-day.
When I was young, of me did Ronsard sing."
None of your maidens that doth hear the thing,
Albeit with her weary task foredone,
But wakens at my name, and calls you one
Blest, to be held in long remembering.

I shall be low beneath the earth, and laid
On sleep, a phantom in the myrtle shade,
While you beside the fire, a grandame gray,
My love, your pride, remember and regret;
Ah, love me, love, we may be happy yet,
And gather roses, while 'tis called to-day.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

On His Lady's Waking

MY lady woke upon a morning fair,
What time Apollo's chariot takes the skies,
And, fain to fill with arrows from her eyes
His empty quiver, Love was standing there:
I saw two apples that her breast doth bear
None such the close of the Hesperides
Yields; nor hath Venus any such as these,
Nor she that had of nursling Mars the care.

Even such a bosom, and so fair it was,
Pure as the perfect work of Phidias,

That sad Andromeda's discomfiture
Left bare, when Perseus passed her on a day,
And pale as death for fear of death she lay,
With breast as marble cold, as marble pure.
(*Andrew Lang.*)

His Lady's Death

TWAIN that were foes, while Mary lived, are fled;
One laurel-crowned abides in heaven, and one
Beneath the earth has fared, a fallen sun,
A light of love among the loveless dead.
The first is Chastity, that vanquished
The archer Love, that held joint empery
With the sweet beauty that made war on me,
When laughter of lips with laughing eyes was wed.

Their strife the Fates have closed, with stern control,
The earth holds her fair body, and her soul
An angel with glad angels triumpheth;
Love has no more that he can do; desire
Is buried, and my heart a faded fire,
And for Death's sake, I am in love with Death.
(*Andrew Lang.*)

His Lady's Tomb

AS in the gardens, all through May, the rose,
Lovely, and young, and fair appareled,
Makes sunrise jealous of her rosy red,
When dawn upon the dew of dawning glows;
Graces and Loves within her breast repose,
The woods are faint with the sweet odor shed,
Till rains and heavy suns have smitten dead
The languid flower, and the loose leaves unclose,—

So this, the perfect beauty of our days,
When earth and heaven were vocal of her praise,

The fates have slain, and her sweet soul reposes;
And tears I bring, and sighs, and on her tomb
Pour milk, and scatter buds of many a bloom,
That dead, as living, she may be with roses.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

And Lightly, Like the Flowers

"Ainsi qu'aux fleurs la vieillesse,
Fera ternir votre beaute."—

AND lightly, like the flowers,
Your beauties Age will dim,
Who makes the song a hymn,
And turns the sweets to sour.

Alas, the chubby Hours
Grow lank and gray and grim,
And lightly, like the flowers,
Your beauties Age will dim.

Still rosy are the bowers,
The walks yet green and trim.
Among them let your whim
Pass sweetly, like the showers,
And lightly, like the flowers.

(W. E. Henley.)

The Paradox of Time

(A variation on Ronsard)

Le temps s'en va, le temps s'en va, madame!
Las! le temps non: mais "NOUS nous en allons!"

TIME goes, you say? Ah, no!
Alas, Time stays, *we* go;
Or else, were this not so,
What need to chain the hours,

For Youth were always ours?
Time goes, you say?—ah no!

Ours is the eyes' deceit
Of men whose flying feet
Lead through some landscape low;
We pass, and think we see
The earth's fixed surface flee:—
Alas, Time stays,—we go!

Once in the days of old,
Your locks were curling gold,
And mine had shamed the crow.
Now, in the self-same stage,
We've reached the silver age;
Time goes, you say?—ah, no!

Once, when my voice was strong,
I filled the woods with song
To praise your "rose" and "snow";
My bird, that sang, is dead;
Where are your roses fled?
Alas, Time stays,—we go!

See, in what traversed ways,
What backward Fate delays
The hopes we used to know;
Where are your old desires?—
Ah, where those vanished fires?
Time goes, you say?—ah, no!

How far, how far, O Sweet,
The past behind our feet
Lies in the even-glow!
Now on the forward way,
Let us fold hands, and pray;
Alas, Time stays,—*we* go.

(Austin Dobson.)

JOACHIM DU BELLAY (1525-1560)

From the Visions

I

IT was the time, when rest, soft sliding downe
From heavens hight into men's heavy eyes,
In the forgetfulnes of sleepe doth drowne
The carefull thoughts of mortall miseries;
Then did a ghost before mine eyes appeare,
On that great rivers banck, that runnes by Rome;
Which, calling me by name, bad me to reare
My lookes to heaven, whence all good gifts do come,
And crying lowd, "Lo! now beholde," quoth hee,
"What under this great temple placed is:
Lo, all is nought but flying vanitee!"
So I, that know this world's inconstancies,
Sith onely God surmounts all times decay,
In God alone my confidence do stay.

II

On high hills top I saw a stately frame,
An hundred cubits high by iust assize,[1]
With hundreth pillours fronting faire the same,
All wrought with diamond after Dorick wize:
Nor brick nor marble was the wall in view,
But shining christall, which from top to base
Out of her womb a thousand rayons[2] threw,
One hundred steps of Afrike golds enchase:
Golde was the parget[3]; and the seeling bright
Did shine all scaly with great plates of golde;
The floore of iasp and emeraude was dight.
O, worlds vainesse! Whiles thus I did behold,
An earthquake shooke the hill from lowest seat,
And overthrew this frame with ruine great.

[1] Measure.
[2] Beams, rays.
[3] Varnish, plaster.

III

Then did a sharped spyre of diamond bright,
Ten feete each way in square, appeare to mee,
Iustly proportion'd up unto his hight,
So far as archer might his level see:
The top thereof a pot did seeme to beare,
Made of the mettall which we most do honour;
And in this golden vessel couched weare
The ashes of a mightie emperour:
Upon foure corners of the base were pight,[4]
To beare the frame, foure great lyons of gold;
A worthy tombe for such a worthy wight.
Alas! this world doth nought but grievance hold!
I saw a tempest from the heaven descend,
Which this brave monument with flash did rend.

IV

I saw raysde up on yvorie pillowes tall,
Whose bases were of richest mettalls warke,
The chapters alabaster, the fryses christall,
The double front of a triumphall arke:
On each side purtraid was a Victorie,
Clad like a nimph, that winges of silver weares,
And in triumphant chayre was set on hie
The auncient glory of the Romaine peares.
No worke it seem'd of earthly craftsmans wit,
But rather wrought by his owne industry,
That thunder-dartes for Iove his syre doth fit.
Let me no more see faire thing under sky,
Sith that mine eyes have seene so faire a sight
With sodain fall to dust consumed quight.

V

Then was the faire Dodonian tree far seene
Upon seaven hills to spread his gladsome gleame,

[4] Placed.

And conquerours bedecked with his greene,
Along the bancks of the Ausonian streame:
There many an auncient trophee was addrest,
And many a spoyle, and many a goodly show,
Which that brave races greatnes did attest,
That whilome from the Troyan blood did flow.
Ravisht I was so rare a thing to vew;
When, lo! a barbarous troupe of clownish fone[5]
The honour of these noble boughs down threw:
Under the wedge I heard the tronck to grone;
And, since, I saw the roote in great disdaine
A twinne of forked trees send forth againe.

VI

I saw a wolfe under a rockie cave
Noursing two whelpes; I saw her little ones
In wanton dalliance the teate to crave,
While she her neck wreath'd from them for the nones[6]:
I saw her raunge abroad to seeke her food,
And, roming through the field with greedie rage,
T' embrew her teeth and clawes with lukewarm blood
Of the small heards, her thirst for to asswage:
I saw a thousand huntsmen, which descended
Downe from the mountaines bordring Lombardie,
That with an hundred speares her flank wide rended:
I saw her on the plaine outstretched lie,
Throwing out thousand throbs in her owne soyle;
Soone on a tree uphang'd I saw her spoyle.

(Spencer.)

Hymn to the Winds

(The winds are invoked by the winnowers of corn)

TO you, troop so fleet,
That with winged wandering feet,
Through the wide world pass,

[5] Foes.
[6] For the nonce, for the occasion.

And with soft murmuring
Toss the green shades of spring
  In woods and grass,
Lily and violet
I give, and blossoms wet,
  Roses and dew;
This branch of blushing roses,
Whose fresh bud uncloses,
  Wind-flowers, too.
Ah, winnow with sweet breath,
Winnow the holt and heath,
  Round this retreat;
Where all the golded morn
We fan the gold o' the corn,
  In the sun's heat.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

A Vow to Heavenly Venus

WE that with like hearts love, we lovers twain,
  New wedded in the village by thy fane,
Lady of all chaste love, to thee it is
We bring these amaranths, these white lilies,
A sign, and sacrifice; may Love, we pray,
Like amaranthine flowers, feel no decay;
Like these cool lilies may our loves remain,
Perfect and pure, and know not any stain;
And be our hearts, from this thy holy hour,
Bound each to each, like flower to wedded flower.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

To His Friend in Elysium

SO long you wandered on the dusky plain,
  Where flit the shadows with their endless cry,
You reach the shore where all the world goes by,
You leave the strife, the slavery, the pain;

But we, but we, the mortals that remain
In vain stretch hands; for Charon sullenly
Drives us afar, we may not come anigh
Till that last mystic obolus we gain.
But you are happy in the quiet place,
And with the learned lovers of old days,
And with your love, you wander evermore
In the dim woods, and drink forgetfulness
Of us your friends, a weary crowd that press
About the gate, or labor at the oar.

(Andrew Lang.)

A Sonnet to Heavenly Beauty

IF this our little life is but a day
In the Eternal,—if the years in vain
Toil after hours that never come again,—
If everything that hath been must decay,
Why dreamest thou of joys that pass away,
My soul, that my sad body doth restrain?
Why of the moment's pleasure art thou fain?
Nay, thou hast wings,—nay, seek another stay.

There is the joy where to each soul aspires,
And there the rest that all the world desires,
And there is love, and peace, and gracious mirth;
And there in the most highest heavens shalt thou
Behold the Very Beauty, whereof now
Thou worshippest the shadow upon earth.

(Andrew Lang.)

Rome

O THOU newcomer who seek'st Rome in Rome
And find'st in Rome no thing thou canst call Roman;
Arches worn old and palaces made common,
Rome's name alone within these walls keeps home.

Behold how pride and ruin can befall
One who hath set the whole world 'neath her laws,
All-conquering, now conquered, because
She is Time's prey and Time consumeth all.

Rome that are Rome's one sole last monument,
Rome that alone hast conquered Rome the town,
Tiber alone, transient and seaward bent,
Remains of Rome. O world, thou unconstant mine.
That which stands firm in thee Time batters down,
And that which fleeteth doth outrun swift time.

(Ezra Pound.)

LOUISE LABÉ (1526-1566)

Povre Ame Amoureuse

(Sapphics)

WHEN to my lone soft bed at eve returning
Sweet desir'd sleep already stealeth o'er me,
My spirit flieth to the fairy-land of her tyrannous love.

Him then I think fondly to kiss, to hold him
Frankly then to my bosom; I that all day
Have looked for him suffering, repining, yea many long days.

O bless'd sleep, with flatteries beguile me;
So, if I n'er may of a surety have him,
Grant to my poor soul amorous the dark gift of this illusion.

(Robert Bridges.)

Long As I Still Can Shed Tears

LONG as I still can shed tears from mine eyes
My bliss with thee regretting once again,
And while my voice, though in a weaker strain,
Can speak a little, checking sobs and sighs,—

Long as my hand can tune the harmonies
Of my bold lute to sing thy grace fain,
And while my spirit shall content remain,
Thee understanding, nothing else to prize,

So long I do not yet desire to die;
But when I feel mine eyes are growing dry,
Broken my voice, my hand devoid of skill,

My spirit in this its dwelling-place of clay
Able no more to shew I love thee still,
I shall pray Death to blot my clearest day.

(Arthur Platt.)

REMY BELLEAU (1528-1577)

April

APRIL, pride of woodland ways,
Of glad days,
April, bringing hope and prime,
To the young flowers that beneath
Their bud sheath
Are guarded in their tender time;

April, pride of fields that be
Green and free,
That in fashion glad and gay,
Stud with flowers red and blue,
Every hue,
Their jeweled spring array;

April, pride of murmuring
Winds of spring,
That beneath the winnowed air,
Trap with subtle nets and sweet
Flora's feet,
Flora's feet, the fleet and fair;

April, by thy hand caressed,
  From her breast
Nature scatters everywhere
Handfuls of all sweet perfumes,
  Buds and blooms,
Making faint the earth and air.

April, joy of the green hours,
  Clothes with flowers
Over all her locks of gold
My sweet lady; and her breast
  With the blest
Buds of summer manifold.

April, with thy gracious wiles,
  Like the smiles,
Smiles of Venus; and thy breath
Like her breath, the gods' delight,
  (From their height
They take the happy air beneath;)

It is thou that, of thy grace,
  From their place
In the far-off isles dost bring
Swallows over earth and sea,
  Glad to be
Messengers of thee, and Spring.

Daffodil and eglantine,
  And woodbine,
Lily, violet, and rose
Plentiful in April fair,
  To the air,
Their pretty petals do unclose.

Nightingales ye now may hear,
  Piercing clear,
Singing in the deepest shade;
Many and many a babbled note

Chime and float,
Woodland music through the glade.

April, all to welcome thee,
Spring sets free
Ancient flames, and with low breath
Wakes the ashes gray and old
That the cold
Chilled within our hearts to death.

Thou beholdest in the warm
Hours, the swarm
Of the thievish bees, that flies
Evermore from bloom to bloom
For perfume,
Hid away in tiny thighs.

Her cool shadows May can boast,
Fruits almost
Ripe, and gifts of fertile dew,
Manna-sweet and honey-sweet,
That complete
Her flower garland fresh and new.

Nay, but I will give my praise,
To these days,
Named with the glad name of Her[1]
That from out the foam o' the sea
Came to be
Sudden light on earth and air.

(Andrew Lang.)

In Praise of Wine

I

WHEN the brimming bowl I drain,
Every care and every pain,
All chagrin and all despite,

[1] Aphrodite-Avril.

Fall to sleep in me forthright.
What availeth me complain
For that Death will me constrain
And against my will one day
Me upon the bier will lay?
Troubled must I therefore be
And my life forwandred see?
Nay, I will but drink the more.
Come, companions, up and pour;
Since, whene'er I drain the bowl,
Every pine and every dole,
All chagrin and all despite,
Fall to sleep in me forthright.

II

My troubles in me die
Forthright, as soon as I
This sacred liquor let
My thirsty gullet wet.
Fain frolic would I sing
And richer than a king
I boast me, more of store
Than Crœsus was of yore.
Prone on my breast reclined,
With ivy-trails I bind
And wreathe my grizzled hairs.
My sorrows and my cares
Beneath my feet I tread
And cast them to the dead.
Let who so will take arms,
Glory, in war's alarms,
For duty's sake to buy:
For me, fain drink would I.
Up, page, then, quick, and brim
The bowl up to the rim;
For better drunk to bed
To go it is than dead.

(John Payne.)

Love and Money

MISFORTUNE 'tis to love at all
And worse misfortune not to love:
But one's heart wish to lack above
All ills is worst that can befall.

Lineage for lovers nothing can;
Love tramples rank beneath his car;
Wit, virtue, breeding, to the man,
Who hath but wealth, superfluous are.

Ah, would to heav'n the miser might
Die wretchedly, who men for prey
To scurvy money did bewray
And first accounted it for right!

For wars and death on dreadful ways
It still hath furthered in their course;
And wretched lovers (which is worse)
Because thereof do end their days.

(John Payne.)

PHILIP DESPORTES (1545-1606)

Sonnet

CAN it be true that I've so much endured whilere
For eyes I see to-day without or joy or pain?
Where are the charms that wove for me so fast a chain?
What of her locks is come, her crispy golden hair?
Upon her faded face with open mouth I stare,
Whose bloom did her of old inspire with such disdain;
And in myself I scoff at my pursuit in vain
And render thanks to Time, that loosed me from the snare.
No absence nor rebuffs, availed in me to do,
The course of Time hath done, that put my love to rout

And made me sage at last, healing my spirit's smart.
For, whenas from your face the roses he did out,
The thorns he rooted up, on like wise, from my heart.

(John Payne.)

The Dream

SHE whom I love so dear, in dreams, unto my bed,
Her cruelty put by, to cheer me came last night.
Sweet was her speech, her eyes of laughter full and light,
And many a thousand Loves went fluttering round her head.

Courage, by dolor urged, I took, with woeful breath
To make complaint aloud anent her heart of stone,
And with a tearful eye, for ruth to her did moan
And prayed her end my woes with pity or with death.

Her kiss-compelling lips soft-opening, thus she spoke
To me with dulcet speech and answered, "Cease thy sighs
"And tears no longer thus force from thy wounded eyes:
"She who hath caused thine ill can heal the heart she broke."

Alack, illusion sweet! Ah, pleasant miracle!
How little durable it is, a lover's bliss!
Me miserable, alas! Thinking her eyes to kiss,
Little by little, wake I felt my dream dispel.

Yet, by a dear deceit, long time thereafter, still
Mine eyes fast shut I kept nor might my dream forsake;
But my sleep passed away and come the hour of wake,
I found my gladness false and real but mine ill.

(John Payne.)

Sonnet

WHEN, you and I, we shall have passed th' infernal stream,
Damn'd, for our several sins, unto the deeps of hell,
I for idolatry, that loved your eyes o'er well,

You, for my heart you slew with cruelty extreme,
If your fair eyes I see forever on me beam,
Neither the eternal night nor pine unquenchable
My courage shall confound nor all the pains that dwell
In those infernal deeps shall cruel to me seem.
You, too, if pleasure yet you take in your disdains
And in my miseries, still may moderate your pains
With watching me endure the torments of my doom.
But, since, on divers ways, we in this world above
Sinned, you for sheer despite and I for too much love,
I fear they'll sunder us, each in a several room.

(John Payne.)

THEOPHILE DE VIAU (1591-1626)

Sleep

I'VE kissed thee, sweetheart, in a dream at least,
And though the core of love is in me still,
This joy, that in my sense did softly thrill,
The ardor of my longing hath appeased
And by this tender strife my spirit, eased,
And half consoled, I soothe myself, until
I find my heart from all its pain released.
My senses, hushed, begin to fall on sleep,
Slumber, for which two weary nights I weep,
Takes thy dear place at last within my eyes,
And though so cold he is, as all men vow,
For me he breaks his natural icy guise,
And shows himself more warm and fond than thou.

(Edmund Gosse.)

PIERRE CORNEILLE (1606-1684)

Les Ravages du Temps

(*Marquise, si mon visage*
A quelques traits un peu vieux.)

IF in me, my lady, traces
Of an aging look you view,
Think, how, at my years, your graces
Shall be at a discount, too.

Time with flouting glee disposes
Of whate'er seems fairest now;—
Nor will spare to blight your roses,
As his lines have marked my brow.

Yet have I some charms unfailing
Of a later lustier prime
Than need stoop, methinks, to quailing
At those ravages of Time.

You have grandeur like a goddess;—
But these gifts you mark with scorn
May endure, when bust and bodice,
Flaunting there, are long outworn.

Theirs 'twill be, soft eyes of laughter
From oblivion to redeem;—
Limning, centuries hereafter,
What I choose to make you seem.

With that unborn generation
Where some voice shall be mine,
Your proud beauty's reputation
Shall be—just what I assign.

(James Robertson.)

LA FONTAINE (1621-1695)

The Cock and the Fox

UPON a tree there mounted guard
A veteran cock, adroit and cunning;
When to the roots a fox up running
Spoke thus, in tones of kind regard:—
"Our quarrel, brother, 's at an end;
Henceforth I hope to live your friend;
For peace now reigns
Throughout the animal domains.
I bear the news. Come down, I pray,
And give me the embrace fraternal;
And please, my brother, don't delay:
So much the tidings do concern all,
That I must spread them far to-day.
Now you and yours can take your walks
Without a fear or thought of hawks;
And should you clash with them or others,
In us you'll find the best of brothers;—
For which you may, this joyful night,
Your merry bonfires light.
But, first, let's seal the bliss
With one fraternal kiss."
"Good friend," the cock replied, "upon my word,
A better thing I never heard;
And doubly I rejoice
To hear it from your voice:
And, really, there must be something in it,
For yonder come two greyhounds, which, I flatter
Myself, are couriers on this very matter;
They come so fast, they'll be here in a minute.
I'll down, and all of us will seal the blessing
With general kissing and caressing."
"Adieu," said Fox; "my errand's pressing;
I'll hurry on my way,
And we'll rejoice some other day."

So off the fellow scampered, quick and light,
To gain the fox-holes of a neighboring height,—
Less happy in his stratagem than flight.
The cock laughed sweetly in his sleeve;—
'Tis doubly sweet deceiver to deceive.

(E. Wright.)

Love and Folly

LOVE'S worshippers alone can know
The thousand mysteries that are his;
His blazing torch, his twanging bow,
His blooming age are mysteries.
A charming science—but the day
Were all too short to con it o'er;
So take of me this little lay,
A sample of its boundless lore.

As once, beneath the fragrant shade
Of myrtles fresh in heaven's pure air,
The children, Love and Folly, played,
A quarrel rose betwixt the pair.
Love said the gods should do him right—
But Folly vowed to do it then,
And struck him, o'er the orbs of sight,
So hard he never saw again.

His lovely mother's grief was deep,
She called for vengeance on the deed;
A beauty does not vainly weep,
Nor coldly does a mother plead.
A shade came o'er the eternal bliss
That fills the dwellers of the skies;
Even stony-hearted Nemesis
And Rhadamanthus wiped their eyes.

"Behold," she said, "this lovely boy,"
While streamed afresh her graceful tears—

"Immortal, yet shut out from joy
And sunshine, all his future years.
The child can never take, you see,
A single step without a staff—
The hardest punishment would be
Too lenient for the crime by half."

All said that Love had suffered wrong,
And well that wrong should be repaid;
Then weighed the public interest long,
And long the party's interest weighed.
And thus decreed the court above:
"Since Love is blind from Folly's blow,
Let Folly be the guide of Love,
Where'er the boy may choose to go."

(W. C. Bryant.)

JEAN-BAPTISTE POQUELIN MOLIÈRE (1622-1673)

To Monsieur de la Mothe le Vayer

(Upon the death of his son)

LET thy tears, Le Vayer, let them flow;
None of scant cause thy sorrowing can accuse,
Since, losing that which thou for aye dost lose,
E'en the most wise might find a ground for woe.

Vainly we strive with precepts to forego
The drops of pity that are Pity's dues;
And Nature's self, indignant, doth refuse
To count for fortitude that heartless show.

No grief, alas! can now bring back again
The son too dear, by Death untimely ta'en;
Yet, not the less, his loss is heard to bear,

Graced as he was by all the world reveres,
Large heart, keen wit, a lofty soul and rare,
—Surely these claim eternity of tears!

(Austin Dobson.)

JEAN RACINE (1639-1699)

From the Chorus of "Athalie"

The Chorus:

THE God whose goodness filleth every clime,
Let all His creatures worship and adore;
Whose throne was reared before the birth of time,
To him be glory now and evermore.

One Voice:

The sons of violence in vain
Would check his people's grateful strain,
And blot his sacred name;
Yet day to day his power declares,
His bounty every creature shares,
His greatness all proclaim.

Another Voice:

Dispensing light and life at his behest,
Burst forth the sun by him in splendor drest;
But of almighty love a brighter sign,
Shone forth thy law, pure, perfect, and divine.

(Charles Randolph.)

VOLTAIRE (1694-1778)

Stanzas Upon the Epic Poets

THE ancient Homer I admire,
Replete with faults, but full of fire;
He, like the heroes of his time,
Is a great prattler, but sublime.

Virgil could greater charms impart
To poetry, and had more art:
But he his fire with Dido spends,
And with Lavinia coldly ends.

Too much of magic and false graces,
Tasso, below both poets, places;
But his two heroines' heavenly charms
Have force that critic rage disarms.

Milton, tho' more sublime than these,
Does not so much a reader please:
He wrote in strange fantastic flights,
For madmen, angels, hellish sprites.

'Twould be presumption but to name
Myself with bards so dear to fame;
'Tis death alone that can decree
What place shall be consigned to me.

You, who by wit and beauty shine,
Who charm the world by grace divine;
In your affections, if I find
A place, I'm first of human kind.

(Tobias Smollett?)

ANDRÉ CHÉNIER (1760-1794)

Elegies

I

EVERY man has his sorrows; yet each still
Hides under a calm forehead his own will.
Each pities but himself. Each in his grief
Envies his neighbor: he too seeks relief;
For one man's pain is of no other known:
They hide their sorrows as he hides his own;

And each, with tears and aching heart, can sigh:
All other men are happy, but not I.
They are unhappy all. They, desolate,
Cry against heaven and bid heaven change their fate.
Their fate is changed; they soon, with fresh tears, know
They have but changed one for another woe.

(Arthur Symons.)

II

A white nymph wandering in the woods by night
Spies a swift satyr, and pretends a flight;
She runs, and, running, feigns to call him back!
The goat-foot, following on her flying track,
Falls down and flounders in the stagnant pool:
Whereat they, while he whimpers, mock the fool.

(Arthur Symons.)

III

Well, I would have it so. I should have known
How many times I made her will my own.
For once, at least, I should have let her be,
And waited, till I made her come to me.
No. I forget what fretful cries last night
Drove me to bitter silence and to flight;
This morning, O weak heart, I long
To have her back, yet do her pride no wrong.

I fly to her, take all her wrongs, but she
Whom I would pardon will not pardon me.
I it is who am false, unjust, and seek
To show my horrid strength where she is weak.
And floods and tempest come, and tears that flow
Obediently, as she would have them go.
And I, to have some peace, must own defeat,
Kneel down, and take her pardon at her feet.

(Arthur Symons.)

The Young Captive

THE green ear ripes while the sickle stays,
The ungathered grape, clustering in summer days,
Drinks the dawn's dewy boon;
Like theirs my beauty is, my youth like theirs,
And though the present hour has griefs and cares
I would not die so soon.

Let tearless Stoics seek the arms of Death!
I weep and hope; before the black wind's breath
I bend, then raise my head.
Among my bitter days some sweet I find!
What honey leaves no satiate taste behind?
What seas no tempest dread?

Life's fresh illusion dwells within my breast.
My limbs in vain these prison-walls invest;
Hope ever gives me wings.
As when, escape the cruel fowler's snare,
More light, more joyful in the fields of air
Philomel soars and sings.[1]

Why should I wish to die? From peaceful sleep
Peaceful I wake; not with remorse I weep,
Nor crimes my rest destroy.
My welcome to the dawn in all things smiles;
On somber brows my look almost beguiles
A reawakening joy.

I seem so far from the bright journey's end!
These elms that fringe the path on which I wend
Stretch forth in endless rows.
Fresh at the feast of life, like a new guest,
One moment only my fond lips have pressed
The cup that overflows.

[1] The young captive says *Philomele,* but perhaps she is thinking of the dark.

'Tis spring; the harvest is not yet begun;
From season to new season, like the sun,
I would fulfill my year.
Flower of life's garden, shining on the bright
Spray, scarce have I beheld the morning light,
And noon is not yet near.

Death, come not nigh me now. . . . depart, depart!
Console the sons of fear and shame whose heart
Sinks in despair's pale swoon:
To me, green Palès with her flock belongs,
The Loves with kisses, and the Muses' songs;
I would not die so soon.

(W. J. Robertson.)

Communion of Saints

WHAT happy bonds together unite you, ye living and dead,
Your fadeless love-bloom, your manifold memories.

(Robert Bridges.)

JOSEPH ROUGET-DE-L'ISLE (1760-1836)

The Marseilles Hymn

YE sons of France, awake to glory!
Hark! hark! what myriads bid you rise!
Your children, wives, and grandsires hoary,—
Behold their tears and hear their cries!
Shall hateful tyrants, mischief breeding,
With hireling hosts, a ruffian band,
Affright and desolate the land,
While liberty and peace lie bleeding?

To arms! to arms! ye brave!
The avenging sword unsheathe!

March on! march on! all hearts resolved
On victory or death!

Now, now, the dangerous storm is rolling,
Which treacherous kings confederate raise;
The dogs of war, let loose, are howling,
And, lo! our fields and cities blaze.
And shall we basely view the ruin,
While lawless force, with guilty stride,
Spreads desolation far and wide,
With crimes and blood his hands imbruing?

To arms! to arms! ye brave! &c.

With luxury and pride surrounded,
The bold, insatiate despots dare—
Their thirst of gold and power unbounded—
To mete and vend the light and air.
Like beasts of burden would they load us,
Like gods would bid their slaves adore;
But man is man, and who is more?
Then shall they longer lash and goad us?

To arms! to arms! ye brave! &c.

O Liberty, can man resign thee,
Once having felt thy generous flame?
Can dungeons, bolts, or bars confine thee,
Or whips thy noble spirit tame?
Too long the world has wept, bewailing,
That Falsehood's dagger tyrants wield;
But Freedom is our sword and shield,
And all their arts are unavailing.

To arms! to arms! ye brave! &c.

(Anon.)

PIERRE JEAN DE BERANGER (1780-1857)

The King of Yvetot

THERE flourished once a potentate,
Whom history doesn't name;
He rose at ten, retired at eight,
And snored unknown to fame!
A night-cap for his crown he wore,
A common cotton thing,
Which Jeanette to his bedside bore,
This jolly little king!
Ho, ho, ho, ho! Ha, ha, ha, ha!
This jolly little king!

With four diurnal banquets he
His appetite allayed,
And on a jackass leisurely
His royal progress made.
No cumbrous state his steps would clog,
Fear to the winds he'd fling;
His single escort was a dog,
This jolly little king!
Ho, ho, ho, ho! Ha, ha, ha, ha!
This jolly little king!

He owned to only one excess,—
He doted on his glass,—
But when a king gives happiness,
Why that, you see, will pass!
On every bottle, small or great,
For which he used to ring,
He laid a tax inordinate,
This jolly little king!
Ho, ho, ho, ho! Ha, ha, ha, ha!
This jolly little king!

Such crowds of pretty girls he found
Occasion to admire,

It gave his subjects double ground
For greeting him as Sire!
To shoot for cocoanuts he manned
His army every spring,
But all conscription sternly banned
This jolly little king!
Ho, ho, ho, ho! Ha, ha, ha, ha!
This jolly little king!

He eyed no neighboring domain
With envy or with greed,
And, like a pattern sovereign,
Took Pleasure for his creed!
Yet, it was not, if aright I ween,
Until his life took wing,
His subjects saw that he had been
A jolly little king.
Ho, ho, ho, ho! Ha, ha, ha, ha!
This jolly little king!

This worthy monarch, readers mine,
You even now may see,
Embellishing a tavern-sign
Well known to you and me!
There, when the fête-day bottle flows,
Their bumpers they will bring,
And toast beneath his very nose
This jolly little king.
Ho, ho, ho, ho! Ha, ha, ha, ha!
This jolly little king!

(William Toynbee.)

Les Souvenirs du Peuple

FOR many a year his glory
Beneath the thatch shall fill our ears;
The lowly roof in fifty years
Shall know no other story.

Village folk shall come and gaze,
  Cry to some old dame or other,—
With a tale of other days
  Come and kill the gloaming, mother!
Though he cost us life and limb,
Yet his people still revere him,
  Yes, revere him!
—Good-by, tell how you stood near him;
  Tell us now of him!

Children, through the village here
  He passed, with kings behind him;—
  Ah me, how well I mind him!
I first kept house that year.
Climbing up just where I sat
  On the hill to get a view;—
He had on a little hat,
  He had on a gray surtout.
How my head went round, so nigh him!
Says he, "Good day, my dear,
  Good day, my dear!"
—He spoke to you, goody, here!
  He spoke to you, close by him?

The year after that again
  I saw him in Paris one day,
  My own poor self, on his way
To our Lady's with all his train.
All hearts were happy together
  Admiring the flags and the drums;
All were saying, "What beautiful weather!
  Heaven guards him wherever he comes!"
His smile was so gentle, too!
God had given him a little boy,
  Given him a little boy!
—What a day for you, goody, of joy,
  What a day of joy for you!

But when we had to yield
  Our poor Champagne to strangers,

He, braving out all dangers,
Seemed holding alone the field.
As it might be to-day,—might be,—
One night comes a rap at the door.
I opened;—good God! it was he,
With one or two guards, not more.
He sat down in this very chair,
Crying out, "Oh, what a war!
Oh, what a war!"
—He sat, goody, just where you are?
He sat where you are, there!

"I am hungry," he says, and I get him
A hunch, and a posset to drink;
Then he dries his clothes, and the blink
Of the fire to sleep soon set him.
On waking he sees my eyes wet,
And says he, "Cheer up, and have heart!
I am off to avenge France yet
Under Paris, for all her smart."
He goes;—like a treasure found
I have kept his glass from that day,
Kept his glass from that day.
—Have it safe, goody, still, you say?
Have it safe and sound?

Here, see it! But all the while
The hero's hopes were drowned;
He, whom a pope had crowned,
Died in a desert isle.
For long none thought it could be;
Folk said, "He is going to appear;
He is come to us over the sea,
They shall know that their master is here."
When we came to find none of it true,
To me 'twas a sore distress!
'Twas a sore distress!
—Nay, goody, God will bless—
God will bless you.

(James Robertson.)

Le Cinq May

(Des Espagnols m'ont pris sur leur navire)

SPANIARDS took me on friendly deck,
Far away by an Indian strand;—
Waif and stray from an empire's wreck,
Sick at heart in a stranger land.
Five years gone! But the cape is past;—
Crossing the line on the wave at last:—
France, poor soldier, again to see!
There my boy has a shroud for me.

"Land!" cries the pilot; "Sainte-Helene!"
There he is drooping in watch and ward.
Hate dies down in you, hearts of Spain,—
His chains we curse, and his butcher guard.
Nothing can I do, nothing to save;
Times are past for a glorious grave.
France, poor soldier, again to see!
There my boy has a shroud for me.

Is he asleep? that bolt of steel
Shattering thrones, a score at a breath;—
Shall he not rise in his wrath, his heel
Crushing the kings as he goes to death?
Hope recoils from that iron shore:
Gods and the eagle are friends no more.
France, poor soldier, again to see!
There my boy has a shroud for me.

Victory strained to follow his will;
Then she flagged, but he would not stay:
Twice betrayed, he has foiled them still;—
Ah! but the snakes that entwine his way!
Venom lurks in the laurel wreath;
Conquering brows are crowned with death.
France, poor soldier, again to see!
There my boy has a shroud for me.

Let but a sail peep over the main,
"He!" cry the monarchs, "escaped his isle?
Comes he to ask for his world again?
Arm two million rank and file!"
He, perchance, with his anguish spent,
A last farewell to his France has sent.
France, poor soldier, again to see!
There my boy has a shroud for me.

Grand in spirit and great in worth,
Why did a scepter tempt his pride?
High above every throne on earth
Glows that peak in the waters wide;—
His glory's light as a beacon borne
To a world in its youth, and a world outworn.
France, poor soldier, again to see!
There my boy has a shroud for me.

Hearts of Spain! What flickers on shore?
A banner of black? O Heaven! 'tis true!
He—and to die? Our Star no more!
Ah! you are weeping, his foes, e'en you.
Silent, far from the rock we fly:—
The sun is withered from out the sky.
France, poor soldier, again to see!
There my boy has a shroud for me.

(James Robertson.)

MARCELINE DESBORDES-VALMORE (1785-1859)

Refuge

I'LL go, I'll go and bear my withered laurel crown
Unto my father's garth, where all flowers live again;
There forth at length I'll pour my soul, with grief bowed down;
My Father secrets hath to solace every pain.

I'll go, I'll go, with tears, at least, to Him to cry,
"Look on me of Thy grace! I suffered have." And He,
Beneath my pallor void of charm and under my
Changed traits, because He is my Father, will know me.

"'Tis you, then," will He say, "dear desolated soul!
Have your feet weary grown of yonder world of sin?
Dear soul, I'm God: put off your trouble and your dole.
Behold your house! Behold my heart! Come, enter in."

O refuge sacrosanct! O mildness! Father mine,
Thou heardst thy child that wept and hearkenedst to her.
Mine art Thou now, since hope I have in Thee, in fine,
And Thou possessest all that I have lost down here.

The flower that's fair no more Thou spurn'st not, Father mild:
This, that's a crime on earth, in heaven pardon they;
Thou wilt not angered be with thine unfaithful child,
For that she nought hath sold, but all hath given away.

(John Payne.)

ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE (1790-1869)

Le Lac

STILL tow'rd new shores we wend our unreturning way,
Into th' eternal night borne off before the blast;
May we then never on the ages' ocean cast
Anchor for one sole day?

The year hath scarce attained its term and now alone,
By thy beloved waves, which she should see again,
O lake, behold, I come to sit upon this stone,
Where she to sit was fain.

Thou murmurest then as now against thy rocky steep;
As now thou brok'st in foam upon thy sheltered sides;

And at her feet adored the breeze, as now, did sweep
The spray from off thy tides.

One night, rememberest thou? in silence did we float;
Nought in the water heard or air was far and near,
Except the rowers' stroke, whose oars in cadence smote
Upon thy waters clear;

When accents, all at once, unknown to mortal ear,
Th' enchanted echoes woke, and earth, air, water, all,
Straight hearkened, as the voice of her I held so dear
These pregnant words let fall;

"O Time, suspend thy flight; and you, propitious hours,
Your course a moment stay!
Let us the swift delights taste of this day of ours,
Of this our fairest day!

Unfortunates enough on earth implore your power;
For them alone flow yet!
Bear with their days away the cares that them devour
And happy folk forget.

But I implore in vain a moment of delay;
Time 'scapes me, still a-flight;
Unto the night I say, "Be slower!" And the day
Will soon disperse the night.

Let us then love, love still and haste the hour that flees
Now to enjoy. Alas!
Man hath no port and Time no shore hath its seas;
It lapses and we pass.

Can't be, O jealous Time, that these our hours so sweet,
Wherein, by long-drawn draughts, Love pours us happiness,
With the same breathless speed away from us do fleet
As the days distress?

What! May we not avail at least to fix their trace?
Are they, then, wholly past and lost for evermore?
Will time, that gave them us and doth them now efface,
Them ne'er to us restore?

Death, Past, Eternity, ye black abysmal seas,
What do ye with the days ye swallow thus?
Say, will you give us back those rapturous ectasies
That you bear off from us?

O lake, O grottoes dumb, rocks, forests dark and deep,
You that Time spares or young can cause again to be,
Keep off this night of ours, O goodly Nature, keep
At least the memory!

Be't in thy stormy days or in thy restful nights,
Fair lake, in the aspect of those thy bright hillsides,
Or in those somber pines or in those wilding heights,
That overhang thy tides,

Be't in the breeze that sighs and passes on its way,
In the sounds by thy shores echoed from place to place,
In yonder argent star, that with its dulcet ray
Silvers thy smiling face.

Let, let the wind that moans, let, let the reed that sighs,
The perfumes light that float in thine enbalsamed air,
Let all one hears and sees and breathes beneath the skies
Still "They have loved!" declare.

(John Payne.)

The Valley

MY heart, in which even hope has ceased to live,
Shall weary fate no more with idle breath;
Give me, O valley of my childhood, give
Me shelter for a day to wait on death!

Here the strait pathway leaves the open glade:
Along its devious slopes hang the dense boughs
That, bending over me their mingled shade,
With blissful calm and silence crown my brows.

Two rivulets there through verdant arches gleam,
Thence down the valley wind with serpent course;
A moment blend their murmur and their stream,
And, lost in one, forget their nameless source.

Like theirs the current of my youth did roll
Beyond recall, noiseless and nameless passed:
Their wave is clear, but in my troubled soul
The morning beam no bright reflection cast.

The freshness of these beds, with shadow crowned,
Chains me all day on banks the streamlet laves;
Like a child soothed by song's monotonous sound,
My soul grows drowsy with the murmuring waves.

Ah! here, girdled by ramparts ever green
Whose narrow bound my vision satisfies
I love to linger, and alone, unseen,
Hear the stream only, only see the skies.

Too much my soul has lived and loved and striven;
Living I come to seek Lethean calm;
May blest oblivion by these shades be given,
For save oblivion naught can bring me balm.

My soul finds silence here, my heart repose;
The turmoil of the world comes muffled here,
Even as a distant sound that feebler grows,
Borne on the wind to the uncertain ear.

Hence for life a cloudy veil is thrown,
The past through shadow casts a fading gleam;
Love alone dwells, as some vast shape alone
Survives the awakening from a vanished dream.

Linger, my soul, in this last resting-place,
Even as a traveller, in the dwindling light,
Before the gates of refuge rests a space,
And breathes refreshed the balmy air of night.

Let us, like him, shake from our feet the dust;
The path of life once trod our journeyings cease;
Let us, like him, o'er wearied, breathe in trust
This calm, precursor of the eternal peace.

Thy days, somber and brief like autumn days,
Decline, as on those slopes the night-shades gloom;
When love forsakes thee, and thy friend betrays,
Alone thou treadst the pathway to the tomb.

But Nature's welcome here thy love shall claim;
Plunge in her breast, that ever open lies;
All else may change, but Nature is the same,
And all thy days behold the same sun rise.

Her breast with light and shadow still is stored.
Turn from false loves and dreams that fade erelong;
Adore the voice Pythagoras adored,
Give ear, like him, to the celestial song.

Fly with the north wind on her aërie car;
Follow the noonday glow, the twilight pale:
Beneath the beam of eve's mysterious star
Steal through the woods when shadow swathes the vale.

In Nature seek the soul; blind though thou art,
God gave thee light to know him and rejoice;
A voice speaks in his silence to the heart.
Who has not heard the echo of that voice?

(W. J. Robertson.)

To a Young Girl that Begged a Lock of My Hair

MY hair! that Time turns white, and withering mocks!
My hair! that falls before the winter's frown!
Why should your fingers pleach these fading locks?
Green boughs are best if you would weave a crown.

Think you the brows of manhood, fair young girl,
That forty seasons load with joys and fears,
Wear the blond ringlets in their silken curl
Wherewith Hope plays, as with your seventeen years?

Think you the lyre, attuned to the soul's rhyme,
Sings from our hearts in the full throat,
With never a string that snaps from time to time,
And leaves beneath the touch a silent note?

Poor simple child! What would the swallow sing,
When winter winds beat round her ruined tower,
If thou shouldst crave those feathers from her wing
The ruthless vulture strips and tempests shower?

(W. J. Robertson.)

Evening

THE evening brings the silence back:
Seated on this deserted height,
The soaring chariot of the Night
I follow on its upward track.

Venus upon the sky-line glows:
With her mysterious light the star
Of passion silvers from afar
The grass beneath my feet that grows.

From yonder beech's leafy glooms
I hear the shiver of the sprays,

A sound as of a shade that strays
And flutters round a place of tombs;

And sudden, glancing from the skies,
A ray from yonder star nocturn
Falls on my forehead taciturn
And settles softly on mine eyes.

Mild reflex of a globe of light,
What wilt thou, charming ray, with me?
Com'st thou my prisoned heart to free,
Bringing thy radiance to my sprite?

Descendest thou to tell me all
The mysteries of thy world divine,
The secrets of that sphere of thine,
To which the day will thee recall?

A secret instinct doth it bear
Thee toward wan and woeful wights?
Com'st thou to shine on them a-nights,
As if a ray of hope it were?

Com'st thou for him, to thee that sighs,
To show the Future, veil withdrawn?
Celestial ray, art thou the dawn
Of that bright day that never dies?

My heart with thy resplendence glows;
Transports I feel, unknown before;
I think of those that are no more:
Art thou the soul, soft light, of those?

Belike their happy shades thus steal
Among the boskage odorous:
Enveloped in their image thus,
Nearer to them myself I feel.

Ah, if, beloved shades, 'tis you,
Far from the crowd, from noise afar,

Come thus each night from yonder star,
To mingle with my dreams anew.

Come back, come back, and love and peace
To my waste soul bring back with you,
As falls on flowers the nightly dew,
Whenas the hot day's ardors cease.

But from the sky-line like a pall,
Rises a train of vapors gray;
They veil and blot the dulcet ray
And darkness drowns and swallows all.

(John Payne.)

Song Before Death

(*From the French,* 1795)

SWEET mother, in a minute's span
Death parts thee and my love of thee;
Sweet love, that yet art living man,
Come back, true love, to comfort me.
Back, ah, come back! ah! well away!
But my love comes not any day.

As roses, when the warm West blows,
Break to full flower and sweeten spring,
My soul would break to a glorious rose
In such wise at his whispering.
In vain I listen; well away!
My love says nothing any day.

You that will weep for pity of love
On the low place where I am lain,
I pray you, having wept enough,
Tell him for whom I bore such pain
That he has yet, ah! well away!
My true love to my dying day.

(Algernon Charles Swinburne.)

ALFRED DE VIGNY (1797-1863)

Moses

HE said unto the Lord:—"Shall I ne'er be done?
Where will thou still that I my footsteps turn?
Am I to live for aye, great, powerful, and alone?
Give me, ah, give me leave to sleep the sleep of earth!
What did I to thee to be chosen thine elect?
Let now some other stand 'twixt thee and thine!
Some other curb thy wild steed, Israel!
I gladly make him heir to book and brazen rod.
Why needest thou have dried up all my hopes?
Why not have left me man in all my ignorance?
Alas! thou madest me wise among the wise:
My finger showed thy wandering race its path,
I called down fire upon the heads of kings,
And future time will kneel before my laws.

I am the Great: my feet tread nation's necks,
My hand holds generations in its will.
Alas, my Lord! I am great—I am alone:
Give me—ah, give me leave to sleep the sleep of earth!"

(Grace King.)

JACQUES JASMIN (1798-1864)

The Ice-Hearted Siren

THOU whom the swains environ,
O maid of wayward will!
O icy-hearted Siren!
The hour we all desire, when
Thou too, thou too shalt feel.
The gay wings thou dost flutter,
The airy nothings utter,
While the crowd can only mutter

In ecstasy complete
At thy feet:
Yet hark to One who proves thee
Thy victories are vain
Until a heart that loves thee
Thou hast learn'd to love again.

Sunshine, the heavens adorning,
We welcome with delight;
But thy sweet face returning
With every Sunday morning
Is yet a rarer sight.
We love thy haughty graces,
Thy swallow-like swift paces;
Thy song the soul upraises;
Thy lips, thine eyes, thy hair,
All are fair:
Yet hark to One who proves thee!
Thy victories are vain
Until a heart that loves thee
Thou hast learn'd to love again.

Thy going from them widows
All places utterly;
The hedge-rows and the meadows
Turn scentless; gloomy shadows
Discolor the blue sky.
Then, when thou comest again,
Farewell fatigue and pain!
Life glows in every vein;
O'er every slender finger
We would linger.
Yet hark to One who proves thee!
Thy victories are vain
Until a heart that loves thee
Thou hast learn'd to love again.

Thy pet dove in his flitting
Doth warn thee, Lady fair!

Thee in the wood forgetting,
Brighter for his dim setting
He shines, for love is there.
Love is the life of all:
O answer thou his call!
Lest the flower of thy days fall,
And the grace whereof we wot
Be forgot.
For till great Love shall move thee
Thy victories are vain:
'Tis little men should love thee:
Learn thou to love again!

(H. W. Preston.)

VICTOR HUGO (1802-1885)

The Veil

Sister

WHAT ails, what ails you, brothers dear?
Those knitted brows why cast ye down?
Why gleams that light of deathly fear
'Neath the dark shadows of your frown?
Torn are your girdles' crimson bands;
And thrice already have I seen,
Half-drawn within your shuddering hands,
Glitter your poniards' naked sheen.

Eldest Brother

Sister, hath not to-day thy veil upraised been?

Sister

As I returned from the bath,—
From the bath, brothers, I returned,—
By the mosque led my homeward path,
And fiercely down the hot noon burned;
In my uncovered palanquin,
Safe from all eye of infidel,

I gasped for air,—I dreamed no sin,—
My veil a single instant fell.

Second Brother

A man was passing?—in green caftan?—sister, tell!

Sister

Yes, yes,—perhaps;—but his bold eye
Saw not the blush upon my cheek.—
Why speak ye thus aside? O, why,
Brothers, aside do ye thus speak?
Will ye my blood?—O, hear me swear,
He saw me not,—he could not see!
Mercy!—will ye refuse to spare
Weak woman helpless on her knee?

Third Brother

When sank the sun to-night, in robe of red was he!

Sister

Mercy!—O, grant, me, grant me grace!—
O God! four poniards in my side!—
Ah! by your knees which I embrace!—
My veil! my veil of snowy pride!—
Fly me not now!—in blood I swim!
Support, support my sinking head!
For o'er my eyes, now dark and dim,
Brothers, the veil of death is spread.

Fourth Brother

That veil, at least, is one thou ne'er shalt lift again!

(Democratic Review.)

The Djinns

TOWN, tower,
Shore, deep,
Where lower
Cliffs steep;

Waves gray,
Where play
Winds gay,—
All sleep.

Hark! a sound,
Far and slight,
Breathes around
On the night:
High and higher,
Nigh and nigher,
Like a fire
Roaring bright.

Now on 'tis sweeping
With rattling beat,
Like dwarf imp leaping
In gallop fleet:
He flies, he prances,
In frolic fancies,
On wave-crest dances
With pattering feet.

Hark, the rising swell,
With each nearer burst!
Like the toll of bell
Of a convent cursed;
Like the billowy roar
On a storm-lashed shore,—
Now hushed, now once more
Maddening to its worst.

O God! the deadly sound
Of the Djinns' fearful cry!
Quick, 'neath the spiral round
Of the deep staircase fly!
See, see our lamplight fade!
And of the balustrade
Mounts, mounts the circling shade
Up to the ceiling high!

'Tis the Djinns' wild streaming swarm
Whistling in their tempest-flight;
Snap the tall yews 'neath the storm,
Like a pine-flame crackling bright.
Swift and heavy, lo, their crowd
Through the heavens rushing loud,
Like a livid thunder-cloud
With its bolt of fiery night!

Ha! they are on us, close without!
Shut tight the shelter where we lie!
With hideous din the monster rout,
Dragon and vampire, fill the sky!
The loosened rafter overhead
Trembles and bends like quivering reed;
Shakes the old door with shuddering dread,
As from its rusty hinge 'twould fly!

Wild cries of hell! voices that howl and shriek!
The horrid swarm before the tempest tossed—
O Heaven!—descends my lowly roof to seek:
Bends the strong wall beneath the furious host.
Totters the house, as though, like dry leaf shorn
From autumn bough and on the mad blast borne,
Up from its deep foundations it were torn
To join the stormy whirl. Ah! all is lost!

O Prophet! if thy hand but now
Save from these foul and hellish things,
A pilgrim at thy shrine I'll bow,
Laden with pious offerings.
Bid their hot breath its fiery rain
Stream on my faithful door in vain,
Vainly upon my blackened pane
Grate the fierce claws of their dark wings!

They have passed!—and their wild legion
Cease to thunder at my door;
Fleeting through night's rayless region,
Hither they return no more.

Clanking chains and sounds of woe
Fill the forests as they go;
And the tall oaks cower low,
Bent their flaming flight before.

On! on! the storm of wings
Bears far the fiery fear,
Till scarce the breeze now brings
Dim murmurings to the ear;
Like locusts' humming hail,
Or thrash of tiny flail
Plied by the pattering hail
On some old roof-tree near.

Fainter now are borne
Fitful mutterings still;
As, when Arab horn
Swells its magic peal,
Shoreward o'er the deep
Fairy voices sweep,
And the infant's sleep
Golden visions fill.

Each deadly Djinn,
Dark child of fright,
Of death and sin,
Speeds the wild flight.
Hark, the dull moan,
Like the deep tone
Of ocean's groan,
Afar, by night!

More and more
Fades it now,
As on shore
Ripple's flow,—
As the plaint
Far and faint
Of a saint
Murmured low.

Hark! hist!
Around,
I list!
The bounds
Of space
All trace
Efface
Of sound.

(Anon.)

A Sunset

(From "Feuilles d'Automne")

I LOVE the evenings, passionless and fair, I love the evens,
Whether old manor-fronts their ray with golden fulgence leavens,
In numerous leafage bosomed close;
Whether the mist in reefs of fire extend its reaches sheer,
Or a hundred sunbeams splinter in an azure atmosphere
On cloudy archipelagos.

Oh, gaze ye on the firmament! a hundred clouds in motion,
Up-piled in the immense sublime beneath the winds' commotion,
Their unimagined shapes accord:
Under their waves at intervals flames a pale levin through,
As if some giant of the air amid the vapors drew
A sudden elemental sword.

The sun at bay with splendid thrusts still keeps the sullen fold;
And momently at distance sets, as a cupola of gold,
The thatched roof of a cot a-glance;
Or on the blurred horizon joins his battle with the haze;
Or pools the glooming fields about with inter-isolate blaze,
Great moveless meres of radiance.

Then mark you how there hangs athwart the firmament's
swept track,
Yonder, a mighty crocodile with vast irradiant back,
A triple row of pointed teeth?
Under its burnished belly slips a ray of eventide,
The flickerings of a hundred glowing clouds its tenebrous side
With scales of golden mail ensheathe.

Then mounts a palace, then the air vibrates—the vision flees.
Confounded to its base, the fearful cloudy edifice
Ruins immense in mounded wrack;
Afar the fragments strew the sky, and each envermeiled cone
Hangeth, peak downward, overhead, like mountains over-
thrown
When the earthquake heaves its hugy back.

These vapors, with their leaden, golden, iron, bronzèd glows,
Where the hurricane, the waterspout, thunder, and hell repose,
Muttering hoarse dreams of destined harms,—
Tis God who hangs their multitude amid the skiey deep,
As a warrior that suspendeth from the roof-tree of his keep
His dreadful and resounding arms!

All vanishes! The sun, from topmost heaven precipitated,
Like a globe of iron which is tossed back fiery red
Into the furnace stirred to fume,
Shocking the cloudy surges, plashed from its impetuous ire,
Even to the zenith spattereth in a flecking scud of fire
The vaporous and inflamèd spaume.

O contemplate the heavens! Whenas the vein-drawn day
dies pale,
In every season, every place, gaze through their every veil?
With love that has not speech for need!
Beneath their solemn beauty is a mystery infinite:
If winter hue them like a pall, or if the summer night
Fantasy them starry brede.

(Francis Thompson.)

Heard on the Mountain

(From "Feuilles d'Automne")

HAVE you sometimes, calm, silent, let your tread aspirant rise
Up to the mountain's summit, in the presence of the skies?
Was't on the borders of the South? or on the Bretagne coast?
And at the basis of the mount had you the Ocean tossed?
And there, leaned o'er the wave and o'er the immeasurableness,
Calm, silent, have you harkened what it says? Lo, what it says!
One day at least, whereon my thought, enlicensed to muse,
Had drooped its wing above the beached margent of the ooze,
And, plunging from the mountain height into the immensity,
Beheld upon one side the land, on the other side the sea.
I harkened, comprehended,—never, as from those abysses,
No, never issued from a mouth, nor moved an ear such voice as this is!
A sound it was, at outset, immeasurable, confused,
Vaguer than is the wind among the tufted trees effused,
Full of magnificent accords, suave murmurs, sweet as is
The evensong, and mighty as the shock of panoplies
When the hoarse mêlée in its arms the closing squadrons grips,
And pants, in furious breathings, from the clarions' brazen lips.
Unutterable the harmony, unsearchable its deep,
Whose fluid undulations round the world a girdle keep,
And through the vasty heavens, which by its surges are washed young,
Its infinite volutions roll, enlarging as they throng,
Even to the profound arcane, whose ultimate chasms somber
Its shattered flood englut with time, with space and form and number.
Like to another atmosphere, with thin o'erflowing robe,
The hymn eternal covers all the inundated globe:

And the world, swathed about with this investuring symphony,
Even as it trepidates in the air, so trepidates in the harmony.

And pensive, I attended the ethereal litany,
Lost within this containing voice as if within the sea.

Soon I distinguished, yet as tone which veils confuse and smother,
Amid this voice two voices, one commingled with the other,
Which did from off the land and seas even to the heavens aspire;
Chanting the universal chant in simultaneous quire.
And I distinguished them amid that deep and rumorous sound,
As who beholds two currents thwart amid the fluctuous profound.

The one was of the waters; a be-radiant hymnal speech!
That was the voice of the surges, as they parleyed each with each.
The other, which arose from our abode terranean,
Was sorrowful; and that, alack! the murmur was of man;
And in this mighty quire, whose chantings day and night resound,
Every wave had its utterance, and every man his sound.

Now, the magnificent Ocean, as I said, unbannering,
A voice of joy, a voice of peace, did never stint to sing,
Most like in Sion's temples to a psaltery psaltering,
And to creation's beauty reared the great lauds of his song.
Upon the gale, upon the Squall, his clamor borne along
Unpausingly arose to God in more triumphal swell;
And every one among his waves, that God alone can quell,
When the other of its song made end, into the singing pressed.
Like that majestic lion whereof Daniel was the guest,
At intervals the Ocean his tremendous murmur awed;
And, toward where the sunset fires fell shaggily and broad,
Under his golden mane, methought that I saw pass the hand of God.

Meanwhile, and side by side with that august fanfaronnade
The other voice, like the sudden scream of a destrier affrayed,
Like an infernal door that grates ajar its rusty throat,
Like to a bow of iron that gnarls upon an iron rote,
Grinded; and tears, and shriekings, the anathema, the lewd taunt,
Refusal of viaticum, refusal of the font,
And clamor, and malediction, and dread blasphemy, among
That hurtling crowd of rumor from the diverse human tongue,
Went by as who beholdeth, when the valleys thick t'ward night,
The long drifts of the birds of dusk pass, blackening flight on flight.
What was this sound whose thousand echoes vibrated unsleeping?
Alas! The sound was earth's and man's, for earth and man were weeping.

Brothers! of these two voices strange, most unimaginably,
Unceasingly regenerated, dying unceasingly,
Harkened of the Eternal throughout His Eternity,
The one voice uttereth NATURE, and the other voice HUMANITY.

Then I alit in reverie; for my ministering sprite,
Alack! had never yet deployed a pinion of an ampler flight,
Nor ever had my shadow endured so large a day to burn:
And long I rested dreaming, contemplating turn by turn
Now that abyss obscure which lurked beneath the water's roll,
And now that other untemptable abyss which opened in my soul.
And I made question of me, to what issues are we here,
Whither should tend the thwarting threads of all this ravelled gear;
What doth the soul; to be or live if better worth it is;
And why the Lord, Who, only, reads within that book of His,

In fatal hymeneals hath eternally entwined
The vintage-chant of nature with the dirging cry of humankind?

(Francis Thompson.)

Aubade

SHUT is thy door and yet day breaks!
Why sleep, when morning fills the air?
When to the light the rose awakes,
Wilt thou not wake too, my fair?

O mistress dear,
List to thy swain,
That warbles here
And weeps in vain!

All at thy door for entrance cries,
"I am the Light," says dawn above;
"I'm Harmony," the bird replies
And my heart sighs, "and I am Love!"

O mistress dear,
List to thy swain,
That warbles here
And weeps in vain!

God, who by thee hath made me whole,
Woman for love, angel for praise,
My love created for thy soul
And for thy beauty made my gaze.

O mistress dear,
List to thy swain,
That warbles here
And weeps in vain!

(John Payne.)

June Nights

IN summer time, when day hath fled, with blossoms crowned,
The plain exhales afar intoxicating scents;
With eyes half closed and ears half open to each sound,
One in a half-sleep lies, that but half veils the sense.

The stars are purer then and sweeter seems the shade;
A vague half roseate hue tinges th' eternal dome;
And the dawn soft and pale, waiting its hour foresaid,
Upon the marge of heav'n seems all night to roam.

(John Payne.)

Love's Nest

THE swallow in the spring seeks out the ruined towers,
Ruin where man is found no more, but life still flowers;
The white-throat warbler seeks in April, O my sweet,
The forest dim and cool, half sheltered from the heat,
The moss, and in the crook of boughs, the nested eaves,
Fashioned by crossing sprays and over-hanging leaves.
Thus doth the bird; and we, in the mid-town we seek
The desert nook, the dim, lone shelter, calm and meek,
The sill, to prying eyes, malignant, unexposed,
The street, wherein at noon the shutters still are closed,
As in the fields we seek the herd's, the poet's way,
And in the woods the glade unknown unto the day,
Whereas the air is mute, but for the calling doves.
The bird conceals its nest, and we, we hide our loves.

(John Payne.)

The Lonely Hours

I'VE meditated, Lord, in the nocturnal hours;
Pensive, I've sat, as if an ancestor I were,
Upon the desert peaks, in the dumb woodland bowers,
Where foot of man comes not and one finds Thee alone.

I've harkened to the hoots of the sinister fowl;
I've watched the pallid flower quake in the grasses green,
The tearful trees divide the clouds' gray-woven cowl
And on the sky-line throb the livid dawn I've seen.

I've seen, at eventide, the black phantasmal shapes
Crawl, noiseless, o'er the plains, in the last of the light;
And from the lonely crests looked of the sullen capes
Upon the somber stir of ocean in the night.

I've seen the ghostly moon pass in the pine woods dim
And whiles, a witness full of fears and shudderings,
Have thought to catch a glimpse of panic-struck and grim
Creation's attitude toward the eternal things.

(John Payne.)

By the Seaside

THE sea yields foam and sand, the earth yields: gold as well
As silver, both combined, the emerald waves pervade:
I hear the sound that makes ether impassable,
Immense and distant sound, with silence overlaid.

A little child beside the murmuring ocean sings.
Nothing is great or small; and set, my God, have You,
Above creation all and all created things,
The self-same stars of gold, the self-same skies of blue.

Our lot is mean; but fair our imaginings;
The soul the body bears to the bright day above;
Man is a point in space, that flies with two great wings,
Whereof the one is thought and th' other one is Love.

Serenity of all! Strength, majesty and grace!
The ships back to the port, the birds to the nest flit:
All turn unto repose and I, I hear in space
The palpitations vague of kisses infinite.

The wind the rushes bends upon the proud rocks' brow
And the child's voice that sings bears off. Ah, wellaway!
O wind, how many blades of grass at once you bow,
How many and many a song at once you bear away!

What matter! Here all calms, cradles and fills with peace;
No shadow here at heart, no bitter cares are found;
A peace ineffable mounts and falls without cease
Between the soul's deep blue and the sea's blue profound.

(John Payne.)

Light on the Horizon

I KNOW not why my soul, Lord, in these dreams persists.
The fisher drags his net along the sea-sands pale;
The husbandman plows up the soil; but I the mists
Nocturnal delve; the net of nothingness I trail.

We question Thee, O God; and better mute were we.
What skill our efforts all, our doubts, our combats? Oh!
Why seek to sound th' abyss? Let us wait. Mystery
Lives side by side, in peace, with mankind here below.

The sailor, helpless toy of wind and fate and sea,
Who, as he anchor weighs for sailing, whistles still,
Lets ocean growl; and it, whilst growling, leaves him free
To whistle at his will.

(John Payne.)

The Grave and the Rose

THE Grave said to the Rose,
"What of the dews of dawn,
Love's flower, what end is theirs?"
"And what of spirits flown,

The souls whereon doth close
  The tomb's mouth unawares?"
The Rose said to the Grave.

The Rose said, "In the shade
  From the dawn's tears is made
A perfume faint and strange,
  Amber and honey sweet."
  "And all the spirits fleet
Do suffer a sky-change,
  More strangely than the dew,
  To God's own angels new,"
The Grave said to the Rose.

(Andrew Lang.)

The Genesis of Butterflies

THE dawn is smiling on the dew that covers
  The tearful roses; lo, the little lovers
That kiss the buds, and all the flutterings
In jasmine bloom, and privet, of white wings,
That go and come, and fly, and peep and hide,
With muffled music, murmured far and wide.
Ah, the Spring time, when we think of all the lays
That dreamy lovers send to dreamy mays,
Of the fond hearts within a billet bound,
Of all the soft silk paper that pens wound,
The messages of love that mortals write
Filled with intoxication of delight,
Written in April and before the May time
Shredded and flown, playthings for the wind's playtime,
We dream that all white butterflies above,
Who seek through clouds or waters souls to love,
And leave their lady mistress in despair,
To flit to flowers, as kinder and more fair,
Are but torn love-letters, that through the skies
Flutter, and float, and change to butterflies.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

More Strong than Time

SINCE I have set my lips to your full cup, my sweet,
Since I my pallid face between your hands have laid,
Since I have known your soul, and all the bloom of it,
And all the perfume rare, now buried in the shade;

Since it was given to me to hear one happy while,
The words wherein your heart spoke all its mysteries,
Since I have seen you weep, and since I have seen you smile,
Your lips upon my lips, and your eyes upon my eyes;

Since I have known above my forehead glance and gleam,
A ray, a single ray, of your star, veiled always,
Since I have felt the fall, upon my lifetime's stream,
Of one rose petal plucked from the roses of your days;

I now am bold to say to the swift changing hours,
Pass, pass upon your way, for I grow never old,
Fleet to the dark abysm with all your fading flowers,
One rose that none may pluck, within my heart I hold.

Your flying wings may smite, but they can never spill
The cup fulfilled of love, from which my lips are wet;
My heart has far more fire than you can frost to chill,
My soul more love than you can make my soul forget.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

The Poor Children

TAKE heed of this small child of earth;
He is great; he hath in him God most high.
Children before their fleshly birth
Are lights alive in the blue sky.

In our light bitter world of wrong
They come; God gives us them awhile.

His speech is in their stammering tongue,
And his forgiveness in their smile.

Their sweet light rests upon our eyes.
Alas! their right to joy is plain.
If they are hungry Paradise
Weeps, and, if cold, Heaven thrills with pain.

The want that saps their sinless flower
Speaks judgment on sin's ministers.
Man holds an angel in his power.
Ah! deep in Heaven what thunder stirs,

When God seeks out these tender things
Whom in the shadow where we sleep
He sends us clothed about with wings,
And finds them ragged babes that weep!

(Algernon Charles Swinburne)

Her Name

A LILY'S fragrance rare, an aureole's pale splendor,
The whisper of the waning day;
Love's passionate pure kiss of virginal surrender;
The hour that breathes farewell, mysterious and tender;
The grief by comfort charmed away;

The sevenfold scarf by storm emblazed and braiden,
A trophy to the victor sun;
The sudden cadence of a voice with memories laden;
The soft and simple vow from a shamefac'd maiden;
The dream of a new life begun;

The murmur that with orient Dawn, rising to greet her,
From lips of fabled Memnon came;
The undulant hum remote of some melodious meter:—
All the soul dreams most sweet, if aught than these be sweeter,
O Lyre, is less sweet than her name!

Even as a muttered prayer pronounce it, breathing lowly,
But let it sound through all our songs!
Be in the darkened shrine the one light dim and holy!
Be as the world divine that same voice, chaunting slowly
From the deep altar-place prolongs!

O world! ere yet my Muse, upborne in ample azure,
Her wings for wandering flight unfolds,
And with those clamorous names, profaned of pride or pleasure,
Dares blend that chaster one that, like a sacred treasure,
Love hidden in my heart still holds,

Needs must my song, while yet of silence unforsaken,
Be like those hymns we kneel to hear,
And with its solemn strains the tremulous air awaken,
As though, with viewless plumes and unseen censers shaken,
A flight of angels hovered near!

(W. J. Robertson.)

To a Woman

CHILD! if I were a king, my throne I would surrender,
My scepter, and my car, and kneeling vavassours,
My golden crown, and porphyry baths, and consorts tender,
And fleets that fill the seas, and regal pomp and splendor,
All for one look of yours!

If I were God, the earth and luminous deeps that span it,
Angels and demons bowed beneath my word divine,
Chaos profound, with flanks of flaming gold and granite,
Eternity, and space, and sky, and sun, and planet,
All for one kiss of thine.

(W. J. Robertson.)

New Song to an Old Air

IF there be a fair demesne,
Fresher than the rose is,
Where each season's shower and sheen
Some new bloom uncloses;
Where one gathers, hour by hour,
Jasmine, lily, honey-flower,
Would that such might be the bower
Where thy foot reposes!

If there be a loving breast,
Honor so disposes,
That of all her gifts the best
Love therein encloses;
If this noble bosom yield
High desires to love revealed,
Would that such might be the shield
Where thy head reposes!

If there be a dream of love,
Odorous with roses,
Whence each day that dawns above
Some sweet thing discloses;
Dream that God himself hath blessed,
Wherein soul with soul may rest,
Would that such might be the nest
Where thy heart reposes!

(W. J. Robertson.)

In a Church

O WOMAN! why these tears that dim your sight,
These brows with sorrow drawn?
You, whose pure heart is somber as the night,
And tender as the dawn?

What though the unequal lot, to some made sweet,
To some deals bitter dole;

Though life gives way and sinks beneath your feet,
Should that dismay the soul?

The soul, that seeks ere long a purer realm,
Where beyond storm is peace,
Where beyond griefs that surge and overwhelm,
This world's low murmurings cease!

Be like the bird that, on the branch at rest
For a brief moment, sings;
For though the frail bough bends beneath her breast
She knows that she has wings!

(W. J. Robertson.)

This Age Is Great and Strong

THIS age is great and strong. Her chains are riven.
Thought on the march of man her mission sends;
Toil's clamor mounts on human speech to heaven,
And with the sound divine of Nature blends.

In cities and in solitary stations
Man loves the milk wherewith we nourish him;
And, in the shapeless block of somber nations,
Thought molds in dreams new peoples grand and dim.

New days draw nigh. Hushed is the riot's clangor.
The Gréve is cleansed, the old scaffold crumbling lies.
Volcano torrents, like the people's anger,
First devastate and after fertilize.

Now mighty poets, touched by God's own finger,
Shed from inspired brows their radiant beams.
Art has fresh valleys, where our souls may linger,
And drink deep draughts of song from sacred streams.

Stone upon stone, remembering antique manners,
In times that shake with every storm-wind wild,

The thinker rears these columns, crowned with banners—
Respect for gray old age, love for the child.

Beneath our roof-tree Duty and Right his father
Dwell once again, august and honored guests,
The outcasts that around our thresholds gather
Come with less flaming eyes, less hateful breasts.

No longer Truth closes her austere portals.
Deciphered is each word, each scroll unfurled.
Learning the book of life, enfranchised mortals
Find a new sense and secret in the world.

O poets! Iron and steam, with fiery forces,
Lift from the earth, while yet your dreams float round,
Time's ancient load, that clogged the chariot's courses,
Crushing with heavy wheels the hard rough ground.

Man by his puissant will subdues blind matter,
Thinks, seeks, creates! With living breath fulfilled,
The seeds that Nature's hands store up and scatter
Thrill as the forest leaves by winds are thrilled.

Yea, all things move and grow. The fleet hours flying
Leave each their track. The age has risen up great.
And now between its luminous banks, far-lying,
Man like a broadened river sees his fate.

But in this boasted march from wrong and error,
'Mid the vast splendor of an age that glows,
One thing, O Jesus, fills my soul with terror:
The echo of thy voice still feebler grows!

(W. J. Robertson.)

A Hymn of the Earth

HER throne is the meadow, the field and the plain,
She is dear to the sowers and reapers of grain,
To the shepherds that sleep on the heather;

She warms her chill breast in the fires of the suns
And laughs, when with stars in their circle she runs,
As with sisters rejoicing together.

She loves the bright beam that caresses the wheat,
And the cleansing of winds in her aether is sweet,
And the lyre of the tempest that thunders;
And the lightning whose brow, when it shines and takes flight
In a flash that appals and appeases the night,
Is a smile from the welkin it sunders.

Glory to earth! To the dawn of God's gaze!
To the swarming of eyes in the woodland ablaze,
To nests by the sunrise made splendid!
Hail to the whitening of moon-smitten heights!
Hail to the azure that squanders her lights
From treasuries never expended!

Earth loves the blue heaven that shines equal on all,
Whose radiance sheds calm on the throne and the thrall,
Who blends with our wrongs and remorses,
With our sorrows, that burst into laughter too bold,
With our sins, with our fevers of glory and gold,
The song of the stars in their courses.

Earth is calm when the sea groans beneath her and grieves.
Earth is beautiful; see how she hides under leaves
The maidenly shame of her blushes!
Spring comes, like a lover, to kiss her in May;
She sends up the smoke of the village to stay
The wrath of the thunder that rushes.

Smite not, O thunder! the humble lie here:
Earth is bountiful; yet is she grave and severe;
And pure as her roses in blossom:
Man pleases her best when he labors and thinks;
And her Love is the well-spring that all the world drinks,
And Truth is the milk of her bosom.

arth hoards up her gold, but her harvest she wears;
the flank of dead seasons that sleep in her lairs,
The germs of new seasons assemble;
ne has birds in the azure that whisper of love,
prings that gush in the vales, and on mountains above
Vast forests of pine-trees that tremble.

Vide weaver of harmonies under the skies,
he bids the salute of the slender reed rise
With joy to the height of the cedar;
or her law is the lowly that loves the sublime,
nd she bases the right of the cedar to climb
On the will of the grasses that feed her.

he levels mankind in the grave; at the end
lexander's and Cæsar's proud ashes descend
With the dust of the cowherd to crumble;
he soul she sends heavenward, the carcass she keeps,
nd disdains, in the doom of oblivious deeps,
To distinguish the high from the humble.

ach debt she discharges; the branch to the root,
he night to the day, and the flower to the fruit;
She nourishes all she engenders;
he plant that has faith when the man is in doubt;
blasphemy shame against Nature to flout
With his shadow the soul of her splendors!

Ier breast was the cradle, her breast is the tomb,
f Adam and Japheth; she wrought out the doom
Of the cities of Isus and Horus;
Vhere Sparta lies mourning, where Memphis lies crushed,
Vheresoever the voice of man spake and is hushed,
The grasshopper's song is sonorous.

or why? That her joy may give comfort to graves.
or why? That the ruin and wreck of Time's waves
May be guerdoned with glorification,

The voice that says No with the voice that says Aye,
And the passing of peoples that vanish and die
With the mystical chaunt of creation.

Earth's friends are the reapers; at twilight her face
On the broad horizon would gladly give chase
To the swarm of the hungering ravens;
At the hour when the oxen in weariness low,
When homeward with joy the brown husbandmen go,
Like ships that return to their havens.

She gives birth without end to the flowers of the sod;
The flowers never raise their reproaches to God;
From lilies, still chaste in their splendor,
From myrtles that thrill to the wind not a cry,
Not a murmur from vineyards ascends to the sky,
On their innocence smiling and tender.

Earth spreads a dark scroll beneath the dense boughs;
She does what she can, and with peace she endows
The rocks and the shrubs and the rivers,
To enlighten us, children of Hermes and Shem,
Whose pages the porings of Reason condemn
To a lamp-light that flickers and shivers.

The end of her being is birth and not death;
Not jaws to devour, but a life-giving breath;
When with havoc of battle is riven
Man's furrow and blood-bathed the track that war cleaves,
Earth turns her wild look, that is angry and grieves,
From the plowshare by wickedness driven?

Blasted, she asks him: Why kill the green plain?
What fruit will the wilderness give, and whose gain
Shall be garnered from ruin and ravage?
No boon to her bounty the evil one yields,
And she weeps on the virginal beauty of fields
Deflowered by the lust of the savage.

Alma Ceres was Earth, and Earth's goddess of old,
She beamed with blue eyes over meadow and wold,
And still the world rings with her pæan;
'Sons, I am Demeter, divine, of divine,
'Ye shall build me a temple of splendor to shine
"On the slopes of the Callichorean."

(W. J. Robertson.)

The Streets and the Woods

BEWARE, my friend, of pretty girls;
Shun the bower of the fallen goddess:
Fear the charm of the skirt that whirls,
The shapely bust and the well-laced bodice.

Look to your wings, bird, when you fly!
Look to your threads, O doll that dances!
Turn from the light of Calypso's eye,
And flee from the fire of Jenny's glances!

When they grow tender, then be sure
That slavery lurks within their rapture;
Love's A B C is Art to allure,
Beauty that blinds and a Charm to capture!

The sun-light gilds a prison-cell;
A fragrant rose the goal refreshes:
And just like these, you see, is the spell
Of a girl that lures you into her meshes.

Once caught, your soul is a somber lyre,
And in your thought are storms that thunder!
And weeping follows dead desire
Ere you have time to smile and wonder!

Come to the fields! Spring's gladsome voice
Thrills the vast oaks and wakes the mountains,
The meadows smile, the woods rejoice,
Sing O the charm of crystal fountains!

(W. J. Robertson.)

To the Imperious Beauty

LOVE, like a panic
Seizing the will,
Leaps to tyrannic
Sway with a thrill.

Let me beseech you,
Turn and refuse;
When my sighs reach you
Sing, if you choose.

If I come kneeling,
Near you to dwell,
See my tears stealing,
Laugh, it is well.

Man may dissemble
So to ensnare:
But if I tremble,
Beauty, beware!

(W. J. Robertson.)

Morning

MORNING glances hither,
Now the shade is past;
Dream and fog fly thither
Where Night goes at last;
Open eyes and roses
As the darkness closes;
And the sound that grows is
Nature waking fast:

Murmuring all and singing,
Hark! the news is stirred,
Roof and creepers clinging,
Smoke and nest of bird;

Winds to oak-trees bear it,
Streams and fountains hear it,
Every breath and spirit
As a voice is heard.

All takes up its story,
Child resumes his play,
Hearth its ruddy glory,
Lute its lifted lay.
Wild or out of senses,
Through the world immense is
Sound as each commences
Schemes of yesterday.

(W. M. Hardinge.)

The Pool and the Soul

AS in some stagnant pool by forest-side,
In human souls two things are oft described;
The sky,—which tints the surface of the pool
With all its rays, and all its shadows cool;
The basin next,—where gloomy, dark and deep,
Through slime and mud black reptiles vaguely creep.

(R. F. Hodgson.)

The Poet's Simple Faith

YOU say, "Where goest thou?" I cannot tell,
And still go on. If but the way be straight,
It cannot go amiss! before me lies
Dawn and the Day; the Night behind me; that
Suffices me; I break the bounds; I *see,*
And nothing more; *believe,* and nothing less.
My future is not one of my concerns.

(Prof. Edward Dowden.)

ALEXANDER DUMAS (1803-1870)

Don Juan's Song

(*Don Juan de Marana, Act* II, *Tab.* 2, *Sc.* I.)

THIS evening, whilst walking alone on the strand,
Where I for an hour went, in dreams of you drowned,
My heart I let fall, and forgot in the sand,
Where you, lady mine, coming after, it found.

Now how shall we do to arrange this affair?
Long law suits are; judges are bought, every one.
The cause I shall lose; and yet how shall I fare?
For you have two hearts; and poor I, I have none.

Yet each with good will 'twere the king to arrange
And loss often leadeth to vantage, in fine:
Between us let's make of the two an exchange;
Nay, give me your heart, lady fair, and keep mine.

(John Payne.)

CHARLES-AUGUSTIN SAINTE-BEUVE (1804-1869)

Wish

OH, might I for three years but have my table spread
With pure fresh milk, a black-eyed damsel in my bed,
Leisure all day to dream and mingle tears with dreams,
To sleep at noon beneath the shade of great hornbeams,
To see the vine o'errun my roof and far and wide
The smiling valley stretch beneath the green hill-side,
Each night to madness sweet myself in sleep to yield,
Like to the happy rill that loiters through my field,
For nothing more to wish, remember nought; in sum,
Let me but live my life,—and then, well, Death may come.

(John Payne.)

Reverie

'TIS night: upon her mystic throne,
I see the silver moon arise;
The heav'ns with silver stars are strown:
As 'twere a lake, that stirless lies,
Immense, my soul reflects the skies.

Upon the waveless tides of thought,
In that fair golden-sanded sea,
The azure vault of heav'n, rewrought,
With many a softened color fraught,
Anew depictured is for me.

Enamored of its image bright,
I first enjoy it at mine ease;
But soon, desiring more than sight,
Rash stripling, greedy poet-wight,
I stretch my hand out it to seize.

Farewell, forthright, vault star-engrailed!
Farewell, white light and spotless sheen!
Within my shaken soul, assailed,
Phœbe her trembling face that veiled;
The sky hath lost its blue serene.

Phœbe, hide not thy face from view!
See: I renounce my hopes unwise.
The tide grows slowly calm and blue
Again and my stilled soul anew
Becomes the mirror of the skies.

To seize the image of delight,
Shall I again disturb the stream?
Nay, bent above the surface bright,
Since now unclouded is the night,
Dream will I rather, ever dream.

(John Payne.)

GERARD DE NERVAL (1808-1855)

An Old Tune

THERE is an air for which I would disown
Mozart's, Rossini's, Weber's melodies,—
A sweet sad air that languishes and sighs,
And keeps its secret charm for me alone.

Whene'er I hear that music vague and old,
Two hundred years are mist that rolls away;
The thirteenth Louis reigns, and I behold
A green land golden in the dying day.

An old red castle, strong with stony towers,
The windows gay with many colored glass;
Wide plains, and rivers flowing among flowers,
That bathe the castle basement as they pass.

In antique weed, with dark eyes and gold hair,
A lady looks forth from her window high;
It may be that I knew and found her fair,
In some forgotten life, long time gone by.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

In the Woods

THE small bird's born and sings in Spring:
Have you not hearkened to his lay?
A simple, pure and touching thing,
The small bird's song upon the spray!

The small bird mates in summer new;
He lives and loves but for a day.
How peaceful 'tis, how sweet and true,
The small bird's nest upon the spray!

Then, when the Autumn cometh, he
Is mute before the frost-time gray:
Alas! How happy must it be,
The small bird's death upon the spray!

(John Payne.)

"El Desdichado"

I AM that dark, that disinherited,
That all dishonored Prince of Aquitaine,
The Star upon my scutcheon long hath fled;
A black sun on my hite doth yet remain!
Oh, thou that didst console me not in vain,
Within the Tomb, among the midnight dead,
Show me Italian seas, and blossoms wed,
The rose, the wine-leaf, and the golden grain.

Say, am I Love or Phœbus? Have I been
Or Lusignan or Biron? By a queen
Caressed within the Mermaid's haunt I lay,
And twice I crossed the unpermitted stream,
And touched an Orpheus' lute as in a dream,
Sighs of a Saint, and laughter of a Fay!

(Andrew Lang.)

ALFRED DE MUSSET (1810-1857)

Juana

AGAIN I see you, ah my queen,
Of all my old loves that have been,
The first love, and the tenderest;
Do you remember or forget—
Ah me, for I remember yet—
How the last summer days were blest?

Ah lady, when we think of this,
The foolish hours of youth and bliss,
  How fleet, how sweet, how hard to hold.
How old we are, ere spring be green.
You touch the limit of eighteen
  And I am twenty winters old.

My rose, that mid the red roses,
Was brightest, ah, how pale she is.
  Yet keeps the beauty of her prime;
Child, never Spanish lady's face
Was lovely with so wild a grace;
  Remember the dead summertime.

Think of our loves, our feuds of old,
And how you gave your chain of gold
  To me for a peace offering;
And how all night I lay awake
To touch and kiss it for your sake,—
  To touch and kiss the lifeless thing.

Lady, beware for all we say,
This love shall live another day,
  Awakened from his deathly sleep;
The heart that once has been your shrine
For other loves is too divine;
  A home, my dear, too wide and deep.

What did I say,—why do I dream?
Why should I struggle with the stream
  Whose waves return not any day?
Close heart, and eyes, and arms from me;
Farewell, farewell, so must it be,
  So runs, so runs, the world away.

The season bears upon its wing
The swallows and the songs of spring,
  And days that were, and days that flit;

The loved lost hours are far away;
And hope and fame are scattered spray
For me, that gave you love a day
For you that not remember it.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

Tristesse

(J'ai perdu ma force et ma vie)

LOST is my strength, my mirth, the joy intense
Of very life, the comrades and the zest;—
All, even to my pride, that unsuppressed
Had wrought my spirit to self-confidence.
When truth I recognized, my raptured sense
Dreamed I had found a love to be caressed;
But palling as I clasped her to my breast
Loathing and ashes were my recompense.
Yet is she still divine; and they that curled
The lip in sight of her have dulled their ears
To wisdom's echoes in our under-world.
God speaks: perforce my naked soul replies;—
One thing of all is left me,—that mine eyes
Have sometimes been not unacquaint with tears.

(*James Robertson.*)

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER (1811-1872)

Art[1]

ALL things are doubly fair
If patience fashion them
And care—
Verse, enamel, marble, gem.

No idle chains endure:
Yet, Muse, to walk aright
Lace tight
Thy buskin proud and sure.

[1] From "The Hermit of Carmel and Other Poems"; copyright, 1901, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

Fie on facile measure,
A shoe where every lout
At pleasure
Slip his foot in and out!

Sculptor lay by the clay
On which thy nerveless finger
May linger,
Thy thoughts flown far away.

Keep to Carrara rare,
Struggle with Paros cold,
That hold
The subtle line and fair.

Lest haply nature lose
That proud, that perfect line,
Make thine
The bronze of Syracuse.

And with a tender dread
Upon an agate's face
Retrace
Apollo's golden head.

Despise a watery hue
And tints that soon expire.
With fire
Burn thine enamel true.

Twine, twine in artful wise
The blue-green mermaid's arms,
Mid charms
Of thousand heraldries.

Show in their triple lobe
Virgin and Child, that hold
Their globe,
Cross crowned and aureoled.

—All things return to dust
Save beauties fashioned well
The bust
Outlasts the citadel.

Oft doth the plowman's heel
Breaking an ancient clod,
Reveal
A Cæsar or a god.

The gods, too, die, alas!
But deathless and more strong
Than brass
Remains the sovereign song.

Chisel and carve and file,
Till thy vague dream imprint
Its smile
On the unyielding flint.

(George Santayana.)

Posthumous Coquetry

LET there be laid, when I am dead,
Ere 'neath the coffin-lid I lie,
Upon my cheek a little red,
A little black about the eye.

For I in my close bier would fain,
As on the night his vows were made,
Rose-red eternally remain,
With khol beneath my blue eye laid.

Wind me no shroud of linen down
My body to my feet, but fold

The white folds of my muslin gown
With thirteen flounces as of old.

This shall go with me where I go:
I wore it when I won his heart;
His first look hallowed it, and so,
For him, I laid the gown apart.

No immortelles, no broidered grace
Of tears upon my cushions be;
Lay me on my pillow's lace,
My hair across it like a sea.

That pillow, those mad nights of old,
Has seen our slumbering brows unite,
And 'neath the gondola's black fold
Has counted kisses infinite.

Between my hands of ivory,
Together set for prayer and rest,
Place then the opal rosary
The holy Pope at Rome has blest.

I will lie down then on that bed
And sleep the sleep that shall not cease;
His mouth upon my mouth has said
Pater and *Ave* for my peace.

(Arthur Symons.)

Clarimonde

WITH elbow buried in the downy pillow
I've lain and read,
All through the night, a volume strangely written
In tongues long dead.

For at my bedside lie no dainty slippers;
And, save my own,

Under the paling lamp I hear no breathing:—
I am alone!

But there are yellow bruises on my body
And violet stains;
Though no white vampire came with lips blood-crimsoned
To suck my veins!

Now I bethink me of a sweet weird story,
That in the dark
Our dead loves thus with seal of chilly kisses
Our bodies mark.

Gliding beneath the coverings of our couches
They share our rest,
And with their dead lips sign their loving visit
On arm and breast.

Darksome and cold the bed where now she slumbers,
I loved in vain,
With sweet eyelids closed, to be reopened
Never again.

Dead sweetheart, can it be that thou hast lifted
With thy frail hand
Thy coffin-lid, to come to me again
From shadowland?

Thou who, one joyous night, didst, pale and speechless,
Pass from us all,
Dropping thy silken mask and gift of flowers
Amidst the ball?

Oh, fondest of my loves, from that far heaven
Where thou must be,
Hast thou returned to pay the debt of kisses
Thou owest to me?

(Lafcadio Hearn.)

Love at Sea

WE are in love's land to-day;
Where shall we go?
Love, shall we start or stay,
Or sail or row?
There's many a wind and way,
And never a May but May;
We are in love's land to-day;
Where shall we go?

Our landwind is the breath
Of sorrows kissed to death
And joys that were;
Our ballast is a rose;
Our way lies where God knows
And love knows where
We are in love's land to-day—

Our seamen are fledged loves,
Our masts are bills of doves,
Our decks fine gold;
Our ropes are dead maids' hair,
Our stores are love-shafts fair
And manifold.
We are in love's land to-day—

Where shall we land you, sweet?
On fields of strange men's feet,
Or fields near home?
Or where the fire-flowers blow,
Or where the flowers of snow
Or flowers of foam?
We are in love's land to-day—

Land me, she says, where love
Shows but one shaft, one dove,
One heart, one hand.

—A shore like that, my dear,
Lies where no man will steer,
No maiden land.

(Algernon Charles Swinburne.)

A Verse of Wordsworth

NO verse I know, save one, of Wordsworth's art,
That rankled so in Byron's bitter leaven,
One verse that echoes ever in my heart
Of "Spires whose silent finger points to heaven."

It served as epigraph (how strange a place!)
Heading a chapter from the loves impure
Of some frail girl; the book a foul disgrace
Drawn from the *Dead Ass* by a hand obscure.

This fresh and pious verse, among the loves
Of a lewd volume lost, refused my sight
Like a wild blossom shed, or like a dove's
White plume on the back puddle dropped in flight.

Now, when the Muse rebels, when to no sign
Of Prospero's wand will Ariel's wing be given,
I fringe my margins with a quaint design
Of spires whose silent finger points to heaven.

(W. J. Robertson.)

LECONTE DE LISLE (1818-1894)

Hialmar Speaks to the Raven

NIGHT in the bloodstained snow: the wind is chill:
And there a thousand tombless warriors lie,
Grasping their swords, wild-featured. All are still.
Above them the black ravens wheel and cry.

A brilliant moon sends her cold light abroad:
Hialmar arises from the reddened slain,
Heavily leaning on his broken sword,
And bleeding from his side the battle-rain.

"Hail to you all: is there one breath still drawn
Among those fierce and fearless lads who played
So merrily, and sang as sweet in the dawn
As thrushes singing in the bramble shade?

"They have no word to say: my helm's unbound,
My breastplate by the axe unriveted:
Blood's on my eyes; I hear a spreading sound,
Like waves or wolves that clamor in my head.

"Eater of men, old raven, come this way,
And with thine iron bill open my breast,
To-morrow find us where we lie to-day,
And bear my heart to her that I love best.

"Through Upsàla, where drink the Jarls and sing,
And clash their golden bowls in company,
Bird of the moor, carry on tireless wing
To Ylmer's daughter there the heart of me.

"And thou shalt see her standing straight and pale,
High pedestaled on some rook-haunted tower:
She has two ear-rings, silver and vermeil,
And eyes like stars that shine in sunset hour.

"Tell her my love, thou dark bird ominous;
Give her my heart, no bloodless heart and vile
But red compact and strong, O raven. Thus
Shall Ylmer's daughter greet thee with a smile.

"Now let my life from twenty deep wounds flow,
And wolves may drink the blood. My time is done.
Young, brave and spotless, I rejoice to go
And sit where all the Gods are, in the sun."

(*James Elroy Flecker.*)

The Virgin Forest

SINCE the primæval day, when first from seed it grew,
The forest without end its surging waves of leaves,
Like to a somber sea, with some vast sigh that heaves,
With puissant arm prolong into th' horizon blue.

Man was not yet upon the soil convulsive bred,
When it, already, it, a thousand centuries old,
With its repose, its shade, its anger, had in hold
A vast tract of the globe, yet uninhabited.

In the vertiginous course of the unresting days,
From the wide waters' breast, under the radiant skies,
It hath, one after one, seen continents arise
And others sink afar, like dreams, beneath the haze.

The flaming summer-days on it have shed their sheen;
The raging winds have tossed and blown and battered it:
The levin-stroke upon its ragged stems hath bit;
In vain; the invincible hath still again grown green.

It rolleth, bearing in its gorges and its caves,
Its moss-clad rocks, its lakes with misted, bristling shores,
Where, in the somber nights, the alligator roars
Amid the thick reeds, with eyes dull-shining through the waves;

It's yelling monstrous-paunched gorillas and its broods
Of elephants, with skin cracked like some age-old bark,
That with their puissant gait break down the trellis dark,
Intoxicated with the horror of the woods;

It's surly buffaloes, flat-fronted, to the eyes
Buried in the deep mud of the great water-holes;
Its lions ruddy-maned, with eyes like blazing coals
And tails that sweep away the strident swarms of flies;

Its monstrous rivers full, wide-wandering, profound,
Fallen from the distant peaks, without or name or shore,
Their wild and foaming tides that brusquely turn and pour
From gulf to farther gulf with one resistless bound:

And from the rocks, the sands, from gorge and glade and dell,
From bush and herb and tree, from gully, glen and shore,
Incessantly there soars and swells the ancient roar,
Which hath fore'er exhaled its breast imperishable.

The ages pass and nought hath breached it anywhat;
Nought its immortal strength exhausted hath a whit;
Nay, needs, to make an end, must earth, from under it
Crumbling in pieces fall, as 'twere a broken pot.

Wait not its term; but of to-morrow be afraid,
O forest! This old globe to live hath many a day.
O dam of lions, death for thee is on the way;
The ax unto the root of this thy pride is laid.

Upon this burning shore, where, bending o'er the sand
Their green primæval domes, thy thickest clumps of trees
Vast blocks of shadow cast, light-circled, where one sees
Thy pensive elephants in meditation stand,

Like an irruptive swarm of ants a-wayfaring,
That, crushed and burned, fare on their foreappointed ways,
The waster of the woods, king of the latter days,
Man of the pallid face, the waves to thee shall bring.

So long will he have gnawed and pillaged to the last
The world wherein there swarms his never-sated race,
That to thy swelling paps, whence life yet flows apace,
He, in his hunger, will, and in his thirst, cleave fast.

Thy baobabs will he uproot, to serve his needs;
To thy subjected floods will he appoint a bed;
And thy most puissant sons and daughters will in dread
Flee from this worm of earth, more weakly than thy weeds.

ırelier than lightning-bolts, a-wandering in thy tracks,
His torch shall kindle plain and valley, hill and heat;
Yea, thou shalt in the wind evanish of his breath
nd his work shall upon thy sacred ashes wax.

o more sonorous sounds amid th' abysmal halls;
Laughters and noises vile, cries of despair and crime;
No aisles of leafage more, with shadow-deeps sublime;
nly a black ant-swarm 'twixt black and hideous walls.

ıt thou, without regret, mayst slumber out thy term
Within that pregnant night, where all must redescend:
Thine ashes tears and blood shall water and at end
ıou from *our* ashes shalt again, O forest, germ!

(John Payne.)

A Last Memory

IVED have I and am dead. Inert and open-eyed,
In th' incommensurable abyss, unseeing aught,
ow as an agony, heavy as a crowd, I glide.

down a tunnel dark, pale and devoid of thought,
Hour by hour, day by day, year by year, I descend,
thwart th' Immutable, the Dumb, the Black, the Nought.

dream and feel no more. Th' approof is at an end.
What, then, was life? And was I young or old? Joy, woe,
ın, love, hope, fear! Nought, nought! Hence, flesh forsaken, wend!

he void is in thine eyes: sink lower and more low.
Oblivions thick and yet more thick about thee cling.
an't be I dream? No, no, I'm dead. 'Tis better so.

nd yet this ghost, this cry, this gruesome suffering?
To me it must have happened in far antiquity.
night of nothingness, take me! Sure is the thing;

Some one my heart devoured hath: I remember me.

(John Payne.)

Moonrise

CALM is the sea-scape, gray, immense;
The eye in vain would it survey;
Nothing commences, nothing ends;
It neither night is, neither day.

No surge with foamy fringes breaks;
No stars there be in heaven's height;
Nought is extinguished, nought awakes
And space is neither dark nor light.

Ospreys, gulls, petrels, all are fled:
Upon these tranquil solitudes,
Wherein no porpoise shows his head,
A vague deep weariness there broods.

No sound of voice, no breath that blows:
The keel, the lazy swell that rides,
Forth of the water dull scarce shows
The copper of its shining sides;

And where the sea the hencoops laves,
The men on watch, with dreaming eyes,
Gaze, without seeing, on the waves,
That rise and fall and fall and rise.

But, in the East, a milky sheen,
As of a shower of ashes fine,
Upon th' horizon shed, is seen,
Emerging from the far sky-line.

It floats in shimmering silver skeins,
Dispersed and spread, alow, aloft;
Eddies, falls back again and rains
Its mist diaphanous and soft.

A pale fire shines, unfurled on high;
The quivering ocean opens wide,
And in the pearly-colored sky,
The moon mounts slowly o'er the tide.
(John Payne.)

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE (1821-1867)

The Balcony

MOTHER of memories, mistress of mistresses,
O thou, my pleasure, thou, all my desire,
Thou shalt recall the beauty of caresses,
The charm of evenings, by the gentle fire,
Mother of memories, mistress of mistresses.

The eves illumined by the burning coal,
The balcony where veiled rose-vapor clings—
How soft your breast was then, how sweet your soul!
Ah, and we said imperishable things,
Those eves illumined by the burning coal.

Lovely the suns were in those twilights warm,
A space profound, and strong life's pulsing flood,
In bending o'er you, queen of every charm,
I thought I breathed the perfume in your blood.
The suns were beauteous in those twilights warm.

The film of night flowed round and over us,
And my eyes in the dark did your eyes meet;
I drank your breath, ah! sweet and poisonous,
And in my hands fraternal slept your feet—
Night, like a film, flowed round and over us.

I can recall those happy days forgot,
And see, with head bowed on your knees, my past.

Your languid beauties now would move me not
  Did not your gentle heart and body cast
The old spell of those happy days forgot.

Can vows and perfumes, kisses infinite,
  Be reborn from the gulf we cannot sound;
As rise to heaven suns once again made bright
  After being plunged in deep seas and profound?
Ah, vows and perfumes, kisses infinite!

(F. P. Sturm.)

Spleen

I'M like some king in whose corrupted veins
  Flows aged blood; who rules a land of rains;
Who, young in years, is old in all distress;
Who flees good counsel to find weariness
Among his dogs and playthings, who is stirred
Neither by hunting-hound nor hunting-bird;
Whose weary face emotion moves no more
E'en when his people die before his door.
His favorite Jester's most fantastic wile
Upon that sick, cruel face can raise no smile;
The courtly dames, to whom all kings are good,
Can lighten this young skeleton's dull mood
No more with shameless toilets. In his gloom
Even his lilied bed becomes a tomb.
The sage who takes his gold essays in vain
To purge away the old corrupted strain,
His baths of blood, that in the days of old
The Romans used when their hot blood grew cold,
Will never warm this dead man's bloodless pains,
For green Lethean water fills his veins.

(F. P. Sturm.)

A Madrigal of Sorrow

WHAT do I care though you be wise?
Be sad, be beautiful; your tears
But add one more charm to your eyes,
As streams to valleys where they rise;
And fairer every flower appears

After the storm. I love you most
When joy has fled your brow downcast;
When your heart is in horror lost,
And o'er your present like a ghost
Floats the dark shadow of the past.

I love you when the teardrop flows,
Hotter than blood, from your large eye;
When I would hush you to repose
Your heavy pain breaks forth and grows
Into a loud and tortured cry.

And then, voluptuousness divine!
Delicious ritual and profound!
I drink in every sob like wine,
And dream that in your deep heart shine
The pearls wherein your eyes were drowned.

I know your heart, which overflows
With outworn loves long cast aside,
Still like a furnace flames and glows,
And you within your breast enclose
A damnéd soul's unbending pride;

But till your dreams without release
Reflect the leaping flames of hell;
Till in a nightmare without cease
You dream of poison to bring peace,
And love cold steel and powder well;

And tremble at each opened door,
And feel for every man distrust,
And shudder at the striking hour—
Till then you have not felt the power
Of Irresistible Disgust.

My queen, my slave, whose love is fear,
When you awaken shuddering,
Until that awful hour be here,
You cannot say at midnight drear:
"I am your equal, O my King."

(F. P. Sturm.)

Robed in a Silken Robe

ROBED in a silken robe that shines and shakes,
She seems to dance whene'er she treads the sod,
Like the long serpent that a fakir makes
Dance to the waving cadence of a rod.

As the sad sand upon the desert's verge,
Insensible to mortal grief and strife;
As the long weeds that float among the surge,
She folds indifference round her budding life.

Her eyes are carved of minerals pure and cold,
And in her strange symbolic nature where
An angel mingles with the sphinx of old,
Where all is gold and steel and light and air,
Forever, like a star, unafraid
Shines the cold hauteur of the sterile maid.

(F. P. Sturm.)

The Little Old Women

I

DEEP in the tortuous folds of ancient towns,
Where all, even horror, to enchantment turns,
I watch, obedient to my fatal mood,

For the decrepit, strange and charming beings,
The dislocated monsters that of old
Were lovely women-Laïs or Eponine!
Hunchbacked and broken, crooked though they be,
Let us still love them, for they still have souls.
They creep along wrapped in their chilly rags,
Beneath the whipping of the wicked wind,
They tremble when an omnibus rolls by,
And at their sides, a relic of the past,
A little flower-embroidered satchel hangs.
They trot about, most like to marionettes;
They drag themselves, as does a wounded beast;
Or dance unwillingly as a clapping bell
Where hangs and swings a demon without pity.
Though they be broken they have piercing eyes,
That shine like pools where water sleeps at night;
The astonished and divine eyes of a child
Who laughs at all that glitters in the world.
Have you not seen that most old women's shrouds
Are little like the shroud of a dead child?
Wise Death, in token of his happy whim,
Wraps old and young in one enfolding sheet.
And when I see a phantom, frail and wan,
Traverse the swarming picture that is Paris,
It ever seems as though the delicate thing
Trod with soft steps toward a cradle new.
And then I wonder, seeing the twisted form,
How many times must workmen change the shape
Of boxes where at length such limbs are laid?
These eyes are wells brimmed with a million tears;
Crucibles where the cooling metal pales—
Mysterious eyes that are strong charms to him
Whose life-long nurse has been austere Disaster.

II

The love-sick vestal of the old "Fracati";
Priestess of Thalia, alas! whose name
Only the prompter knows and he is dead;

Bygone celebrities that in bygone days
The Tivoli o'ershadowed in their bloom;
All charm me; yet among these beings frail
Three, turning pain to honey-sweetness, said
To the Devotion that had lent wings:
"Lift me, O powerful Hippogriffe, to the skies"—
One by her country to despair was driven;
One by her husband overwhelmed with grief;
One wounded by her child, Madonna-like;
Each could have made a river with her tears.

III

Oft have I followed one of these old women,
One among others, when the falling sun
Reddened the heavens with a crimson wound—
Pensive, apart, she rested on a bench
To hear the brazen music of the band,
Played by the soldiers in the public park
To pour some courage into citizens' hearts,
On golden eves when all the world revives.
Proud and erect she drank the music in,
The lively and the warlike call to arms;
Her eyes blinked like an ancient eagle's eyes;
Her forehead seemed to await the laurel crown!

IV

Thus you do wander, uncomplaining Stoics,
Through all the chaos of the living town:
Mothers with bleeding hearts, saints, courtesans,
Whose names of yore were on the lips of all;
Who were all glory and all grace, and now
None know you; and the brutish drunkard stops,
Insulting you with his derisive love;
And cowardly urchins call behind your back.
Ashamed of living, withered shadows all,
With fear-bowed backs you creep beside the walls,

And salute you, destined to loneliness!
Refuse of Time ripe for Eternity!
But I, who watch you tenderly afar,
With unquiet eyes on your uncertain steps,
As though I were your father, I—O wonder!—
Unknown to you taste secret, hidden joy.
I see your maiden passions bud and bloom,
Somber or luminous, and your lost days
Unroll before me while my heart enjoys
All your old vices, and my soul expands
To all virtues that have once been yours.
Ruined! and my sisters! O congenerate hearts,
Octogenarian Eves o'er whom is stretched
God's awful claw, where will you be to-morrow?

(F. P. Sturm.)

An Allegory

HERE is a woman, richly and fair,
Who in her wine dips her long, heavy hair;
Love's claws, and that sharp poison which is sin,
Are dulled against the granite of her skin.
Death she defies, Debauch she smiles upon,
For their sharp scythe-like talons every one
Pass by her in their all-destructive play;
Leaving her beauty till a later day.
Goddess she walks; sultana in her leisure;
She has Mohammed's faith that heaven is pleasure,
And bids all men forget the world's alarms
Upon her breast, between her open arms.
She knows, and she believes, this sterile maid,
Without whom the world's onward dream would fade,
That bodily beauty is the supreme gift
Which may from every sin the terror lift.
Hell she ignores, and Purgatory defies;
And when black Night shall roll before her eyes,
She will look straight in Death's grim face forlorn,
Without remorse or hate—as one new-born.

(F. P. Sturm.)

Beauty

I AM as lovely as a dream in stone,
And this my heart where each finds death in turn,
Inspires the poet with a love as lone
As clay eternal and as taciturn.

Swan-white of heart, a sphinx no mortal knows,
My throne is in the heaven's azure deep;
I hate all movements that disturb my pose,
I smile not ever, neither do I weep.

Before my monumental attitudes,
That breathe a soul into the plastic arts,
My poets pray in austere studious moods,

For I, to fold enchantment round their hearts,
Have pools of light where beauty flames and dies,
The placid mirrors of my luminous eyes.

(F. P. Sturm.)

The Sadness of the Moon

THE moon more indolently dreams to-night
Than a fair woman on her couch at rest,
Caressing, with a hand distraught and light,
Before she sleeps, the contour of her breast.

Upon her silken avalanche of down,
Dying, she breathes a long and swooning sigh;
And watches the white visions past her flown,
Which rise like blossoms to the azure sky.

And when, at times, wrapped in her languor deep,
Earthward she lets a furtive tear-drop flow,
Some pious poet, enemy of sleep,

Takes in her hollow hand the tear of snow
Whence gleams of iris of opal start,
And hides it from the Sun, deep in his heart.

(F. P. Sturm.)

The Seven Old Men

O SWARMING city, city full of dreams,
Where in full day the specter walks and speaks;
Mighty colossus, in your narrow veins
My story flows as flows the rising sap.

One morn, disputing with my tired soul,
And like a hero stiffening all my nerves,
I trod a suburb shaken by the jar
Of rolling wheels, where the fog magnified
The houses either side of that sad street,
So they seemed like two wharves the ebbing flood
Leaves desolate by the river-side. A mist,
Unclean and yellow, inundated space—
A scene that would have pleased an actor's soul.
Then suddenly an aged man, whose rags
Were yellow as the rainy sky, whose looks
Should have brought alms in floods upon his head,
Without the misery gleaming in his eyes,
Appeared before me; and his pupils seemed
To have been washed with gall; the bitter frost
Sharpened his glance; and from his chin a beard
Sword-stiff and ragged, Judas-like stuck forth.
He was not bent but broken: his backbone
Made a so true right angle with his legs,
That, as he walked, the tapping stick which gave
The finish to the picture, made him seem
Like some infirm and stumbling quadruped
Or a three-legged Jew. Through snow and mud
He walked with troubled and uncertain gait,
As though his sabots trod upon the dead,
Indifferent and hostile to the world.

His double followed him: Tatters and stick
And back and eye and beard, all were the same;
Out of the same Hell, indistinguishable,
These centenarian twins, these specters odd,
Trod the same pace toward some end unknown.
To what fell complot was I then exposed?
Humiliated by what evil chance?
For as the minutes one by one went by
Seven times I saw this sinister old man
Repeat his image there before my eyes!

Let him who smiles at my inquietude,
Who never trembled at a fear like mine,
Know that in their decrepitude's despite
These seven old hideous monsters had the mien
Of being immortal.

Then, I thought, must I,
Undying, contemplate the awful eight;
Inexorable, fatal, and ironic double;
Disgusting Phœnix, father of himself
And his own son? In terror then I turned
My back upon the infernal band, and fled
To my own place, and closed my door; distraught
And like a drunkard who sees all things twice,
With feverish troubled spirit, chilly and sick,
Wounded by mystery and absurdity!

In vain my reason tried to cross the bar,
The whirling storm but drove her back again;
And my soul tossed, and tossed, an outworn wreck,
Mastless, upon a monstrous, shoreless sea.

(F. P. Sturm.)

Meditation

BE still, my sorrow, and be strong to bear;
The evening thou didst pray for, now comes down,
A veil of dusky air enfolds the town,

Bringing soft peace to some, to others care.
Now, while the wretched throngs of soulless clay,
Beneath the pitiless sting of pleasure's whip
Gather remorse in slavish fellowship,
Sorrow give me thy hand, and come away,
Far from the noise. See the sad years deceased
Lean from the sky in garb of bygone times,
Regret that smiles up from the river's deep,
The sun that sinks beneath the bridge to sleep,
And hear the footsteps of the night that climbs
Like a long shroud, trailing across the East.

(Arthur Reed Ropes.)

The Rebel

AN Angel swoops, like eagle on his prey,
Grips by the hair the unbelieving wight,
And furious cries, "O scorner of the right,
'Tis I, thine angel good, who speaks. Obey!
Know thou shalt love without the least distaste
The poor, the base, the crooked and the dull;
So shall the pageant of thy Lord be graced
With banners by thy love made beautiful.
This is God's love. See that thy soul be fired
With its pure flame, or e'er thy heart grow tired,
And thou shalt know the bliss that lasts for aye."
Ah! with what ruthless love that Angel grand
Tortures and racks the wretch with giant hand!
But still he answers "Never, till I die."

(*Cosmo Monkhouse.*)

Litany to Satan

O GRANDEST of the Angels, and most wise,
O fallen God, fate-driven from the skies,
Satan, at last take pity on our pain.

O first of exiles who endurest wrong,
Yet growest, in thy hatred, still more strong,
Satan, at last take pity on our pain.

O subterranean King, omniscient,
Healer of man's immortal discontent,
Satan, at last take pity on our pain.

To lepers and to outcasts thou dost show
That passion is the paradise below.
Satan, at last take pity on our pain.

Thou by thy mistress Death hast given to man
Hope, the imperishable courtesan.
Satan, at last take pity on our pain.

Thou givest to the Guilty their calm mien
Which damns the crowd around the guillotine
Satan, at last take pity on our pain.

Thou knowest the corners of the jealous Earth
Where God has hidden jewels of great worth.
Satan, at last take pity on our pain.

Thou dost discover by mysterious signs
Where sleep the buried people of the mines.
Satan, at last take pity on our pain.

Thou stretchest forth a saving hand to keep
Such men as roam upon the roofs in sleep.
Satan, at last take pity on our pain.

Thy power can make the halting Drunkard's feet
Avoid the peril of the surging street.
Satan, at last take pity on our pain.

Thou, to console our helplessness, didst plot
The cunning use of powder and of shot.
Satan, at last take pity on our pain.

Thy awful name is written as with pitch
On the unrelenting foreheads of the rich.
Satan, at last take pity on our pain.

In strange and hidden places thou dost move
Where women cry for torture in their love.
Satan, at last take pity on our pain.

Father of those whom God's tempestuous ire
Has flung from Paradise with sword and fire,
Satan, at last take pity on our pain.

Prayer

Satan, to thee be praise upon the Height
Where thou wast king of old, and in the night
Of Hell, where thou dost dream on silently.
Grant that one day beneath the Knowledge-tree,
When it shoots forth to grace thy royal brow,
My soul may sit, that cries upon thee now.

(James Elroy Flecker.)

Don Juan in Hell

THE night Don Juan came to pay his fees
To Charon, by the caverned water's shore,
A beggar, proud-eyed as Antisthenes,
Stretched out his knotted fingers on the oar.

Mournful, with drooping breasts and robes unsewn
The shapes of women swayed in ebon skies,
Trailing behind him with a restless moan
Like cattle herded for a sacrifice.

Here, grinning for his wage, stood Sganarelle,
And here Don Luis pointed, bent and dim,
To show the dead who lined the holes of hell,
This was that impious son who mocked at him.

The hollow-eyed, the chaste Elvira came,
Trembling and veiled, to view her traitor spouse.
Was it one last bright smile she thought to claim,
Such as made sweet the morning of his vows?

A great stone man rose like a tower on board,
Stood at the helm and cleft the flood profound:
But the calm hero, leaning on his sword,
Gazed back, and would not offer one look round.

(James Elroy Flecker.)

Epilogue

WITH heart at rest I climbed the citadel's
Steep height, and saw the city as from a tower,
Hospital, brothel, prison, and such hells,

Where evil comes up softly like a flower,
Thou knowest, O Satan, patron of my pain,
Not for vain tears I went up at that hour;

But, like an old sad faithful lecher, fain
To drink delight of that enormous trull
Whose hellish beauty makes me young again.

Whether thou sleep, with heavy vapors full,
Sodden with day, or, new appareled, stand
In gold-laced veils of evening beautiful,

I love thee, infamous city! Harlots and
Hunted have pleasures of their own to give,
The vulgar herd can never understand.

(Arthur Symons.)

HENRI MURGER (1822-1861)

Spring in the Students' Quarter

WINTER is passing, and the bells
For ever with their silver lay
Murmur a melody that tells
Of April and of Easter day.
High in sweet air the light vane sets,
The weathercocks all southward twirl;
A sou will buy her violets
And make Nini a happy girl.

The winter to the poor was sore,
Counting the weary winter days,
Watching his little firewood store,
The bitter snowflakes fall always;
And now his last log dimly gleamed,
Lighting the room with feeble glare,
Half cinder and half smoke it seemed
That the wind wafted into air.

Pilgrims from ocean and far isles
See where the east is reddening,
The flocks that fly a thousand miles
From sunsetting to sunsetting;
Look up, look out, behold the swallows,
The throats that twitter, the wings that beat;
And on their song the summer follows,
And in the summer life is sweet.

. . . . .

With the green tender buds that know
The shoot and sap of lusty spring
My neighbor of a year ago
Her casement, see, is opening;

Through all the bitter months that were,
Forth from her nest she dared not flee,
She was a study for Boucher,
She now may sit to Gavarni.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

Old Loves

LOUISE, have you forgotten yet
The corner of the flowery land,
The ancient garden where we met,
My hand that trembled in your hand?
Our lips found words scarce sweet enough,
As low beneath the willow trees
We sat; have you forgotten, love?
Do you remember, love Louise?

Marie, have you forgotten yet
The loving barter that we made?
The rings we changed, the suns that set,
The woods fulfilled with sun and shade?
The fountains that were musical
By many an ancient trysting tree—
Marie, have you forgotten all?
Do you remember, love Marie?

Christine, do you remember yet
Your room with scents and roses gay?
My garret—near the sky 'twas set—
The April hours, the nights of May?
The clear calm nights—the stars above
That whispered they were fairest seen
Through no cloud-veil? Remember, love.
Do you remember, love Christine?

Louise is dead, and, well-a-day.
Marie a sadder path has ta'en;
And pale Christine has passed away
In southern suns to bloom again.

Alas, for one and all of us—
Marie, Louise, Christine forget;
Our bower of love is ruinous,
And I alone remember yet.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

Musette

YESTERDAY, watching the swallows' flight
That bring the spring and the season fair,
A moment I sought of the beauty bright
Who loved me, when she had time to spare;
And dreamily, dreamily all the day,
I mused on the calendar of the year,
The year so near and so far away,
When you were lief, and when I was dear.

Your memory has not had time to pass;
My youth has days of its lifetime yet;
If you only knocked at the door, alas,
My heart would open the door, Musette.
Still at your name must my sad heart beat;
Ah Muse, ah maiden of faithlessness.
Return for a moment, and deign to eat
The bread that pleasure was wont to bless.

The tables and curtains, the chairs and all,
Friends of our pleasure, that looked on our pain,
Are glad with the gladness of festival,
Hoping to see you at home again;
Come, let the days of their mourning pass,
The silent friends that are sad for you yet;
The little sofa, the great wine glass—
For know you have often my share, Musette.

Come, you shall wear the raiment white
You wore of old, when the world was gay,
We will wander in the woods of the heart's delight
The whole of the Sunday holiday.

Come, we will sit by the wayside inn,
Come, and your song will again force to fly,
Dipping its wing in the clear and thin
Wine, as of old, ere it scale the sky.

Musette, who had scarcely forgotten withal
One beautiful dawn of the new year's best,
Returned at the end of the carnival,
A flown bird, to a forsaken nest.
Ah faithless and fair. I embrace her yet,
With no heart-beat, and with never a sigh;
And Musette, no longer the old Musette,
Declares that I am no longer I.

Farewell, my dear that was once so dear,
Dead with the death of our latest love;
Our youth is laid in its sepulcher,
The calendar stands for a stone above.
'Tis only in searching the dust of the days,
The ashes of all old memories,
That we find the key of the woodland ways
That leads to the place of our paradise.

(*Andrew Lang.*)

THEODORE DE BANVILLE (1823-1891)

The Nightingale

SEE, on the violet-tops,
Pearls of the summer eves,
Glitter the dew's first drops:
Hark, in the thickest leaves,
Yet with her flight a-swale,
Carols the nightingale.

The moon rides high and free:
The sea, afar that throbs,
The mild melodious sea,

Heaves long and lingering sobs
Of passion and affright,
As I do in thy sight.

As thou art, half-arrayed,
Bide at the window-sill,
My tender, artless maid.
Dost thou remember still
What thou to me didst say
In Paradise one day?

Nay, speak not! At thy knee
Thus seated, let me view
Thy lips that sigh for me,
Thy black-browed eyes of blue.
'Twas yesterday. Thy hair
Fain would I loose, my fair.

O fleece, O glad array
Of tresses, that I love!
Thou art not faithless! Nay,
My golden-plumaged dove,
My angel found again,
'Twas but a dream insane.

(John Payne.)

A Love Song

WHO, ere daylight breaks above,
Since I faint with love and languish,
Will to him, my soul's dear love,
Bear the secret of my anguish?

How, my heart, when all is dark,
Shall my secret send him warning?—
If I breathe it to the lark
She will tell it to the morning.

Love, that in my breast doth burn,
Thrills me with what pang he pleases:—
If the wave my secret learn
She will tell it to the breezes.

Fear my tremulous lip turns pale,
Sleepless pain my lid uncloses:—
If I tell the nightingale
She will tell it to the roses.

How shall I beseech my love
Respite from the woes that follow?—
If I tell the turtle-dove
She will tell it to the swallow.

Like a reed I bend and dream,
Cold neglect my beauty shadows:—
If I tell the azure stream
She will tell it to the meadows.

You that see my soul's despair,
Wings and waves and winds and summer!—
If my glass the secret share
She will tell each curious comer.

Yet, because I faint with love,
You that see my swooning anguish—
Fly and find, abroad, above,
Him for whom my soul doth languish.

(W. J. Robertson.)

FRÉDÉRIC MISTRAL (1830-1914)

The Mares of the Camargue[1]

(From the Mirèio)

A HUNDRED mares, all white! their manes
Like mace-reed of the marshy plains
Thick-tufted, wavy, free o' the shears:

[1] From "Poems by George Meredith"; copyright, 1897, 1898, by George Meredith. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

And when the fiery squadron rears
Bursting at speed, each mane appears
Even as the white scarf of a fay
Floating upon their necks along the heavens away.

O race of humankind, take shame!
For never yet a hand could tame,
Nor bitter spur that rips the flanks subdue
The mares of the Camargue. I have known,
By treason snared, some captives shown;
Expatriate from their native Rhone,
Led off, their saline pastures far from view:

And on a day, with prompt rebound,
They have flung their riders to the ground,
And at a single gallop, scouring free,
Wide nostril'd to the wind, twice ten
Of long marsh-leagues devour'd, and then,
Back to the Vacarés again,
After ten years of slavery just to breathe salt sea.

For of this savage race unbent
The ocean is the element.
Of old escaped from Neptune's car, full sure
Still with the white foam fleck'd are they,
And when the sea puffs black from gray,
And ships part cables, loudly neigh
The stallions of Camargue, all joyful in the roar;

And keen as a whip they lash and crack
Their tails that drag the dust, and back
Scratch up the earth, and feel, entering their flesh, where he,
The God, drives deep his trident teeth,
Who in one horror, above, beneath,
Bids storm and watery deluge seethe,
And shatters to their depths the abysses of the sea.

(George Meredith.)

The Cocooning

(*From the Mirèio*)

WHEN the crop is fair in the olive-yard,
And the earthen jars are ready
For the golden oil from the barrels poured,
And the big cart rocks unsteady
With its tower of gathered sheaves, and strains
And groans on its way through fields and lanes:

When brawny and bare as an old athlete
Comes Bacchus the dance a-leading,
And the laborers all, with juice-dyed feet,
The vintage of Crau are treading,
And the good wine pours from the brimful presses,
And the rudy foam in the vats increases;

When under the leaves of the Spanish broom
The clear silk-worms are holden,
An artist each, in a tiny loom,
Weaving a web of golden,—
Fine, frail cells out of sunlight spun,
Where they creep and sleep by the million,—

Glad is Provence on a day like that,
'Tis the time of jest and laughter:
The Ferigoulet and the Baume Muscat
They quaff, and they sing thereafter.
And lads and lasses, their toils between,
Dance to the tinkling tambourine.

(Harriet Waters Preston.)

The Leaf-Picking

SING, magnarello, merrily,
As the green leaves you gather!
In their third sleep the silk-worms lie,

And lovely is the weather.
Like brown bees that in open glades
From rosemary gather honey,
The mulberry-trees swarm full of maids,
Glad as the air is sunny!

Sing, magnarello, merrily,
The green leaves are piling!
Two comely children sit on high,
Amid the foliage, smiling.
Sing, magnarello, loud and oft:
Your merry labor hasten.
The guileless pair who laugh aloft
Are learning love's first lesson.

Sing, magnarello, merrily,
As the green leaves you gather!
The sun of May is riding higher,
And ardent is the weather.

Sing, magnarello, heap your leaves,
While sunny is the weather!
He comes to aid her when she grieves:
The two are now together.

(Harriet Waters Preston.)

SULLY PRUDHOMME (1839-)

A Supplication

OH! did you know how the tears apace
Fall by a lonely heart, alas!
I think that before my dwelling place
Sometimes you did pass.

And did you know of the hopes that arise
In wearied soul from a pure young glance,
May be to my window you'd lift your eyes
As if by chance.

And if of the comfort you only knew
A heart may bring to a heart that is sore,
You'd rest a while, as a sister may do,
Beside my door.

But if you knew of the love that enwraps
My soul for you, and holds it fast,
Quite simple over my threshold, perhaps,
You'd step at last.

(I. O. L.)

The Ideal

I

THE moon is large, the heaven fair
And full of stars; the earth is spent;
All the world's soul is in the air:
Of one great star magnificent.

II

I dream of one I may not see
And yet whose light must, traveling, gauge
The eternal space and come to be
The glory of another age.

III

When at last it shines above,
Fairest and farthest star in space,
Then let it know it had my love,
Oh! latest of the human race!

(Dorothy Frances Gwiney.)

The Shadow

WE walk: our shadow follows in the rear,
Mimics our notions, treads where'er we tread,
Looks without seeing, listens without an ear,
Crawls while we walk with proud uplifted head.

Like to his shadow, man himself down here,
A little living darkness, a frail shred
Of form, sees, speaks, but with no knowledge clear,
Saying to Fate, "By thee my feet are led."

Man shadows but a lower angel who,
Fallen from high, is but a shadow too;
So man himself an image is of God.

And, may be, in some place by us untrod,
Near deepest depths of nothingness or ill,
Some wraith of human wraiths grows, darker still.

(*Arthur O'Shaughnessy.*)

Profanation

BEAUTY, that mak'st the body like a fane,
What gods have spurned thee, since thou fall'st thus low,
Lending thyself to harlots and thy glow
To deck dead hearts that cannot live again?

Made for the chaste and strong, didst thou in vain
Seek strength and purity, round such to throw
Thy glorious garb aright? and is it so
Thou robest sin and hidest falsehood's stain?

Fly back to heaven; profane no more thy worth,
Nor drag down love and genius to base kneeling
At foot of courtezans when thee they seek.

Quit the white flock of women; and henceforth
Form shall be molded upon truth, revealing
The soul, and truth upon the brow shall speak.

(*Arthur O'Shaughnessy.*)

The Struggle

NIGHTLY tormented by returning doubt,
I dare the sphinx with faith and unbelief;
And through lone hours when no sleep brings relief
The monster rises all my hopes to flout.

In a still agony, the light blown out,
I wrestle with the unknown; nor long nor brief
The night appears, my narrow couch of grief
Grown like the grave with Death walled round about.

Sometimes my mother, coming with her lamp,
Seeing my brow as with a death-sweat damp,
Asks, "Ah, what ails thee, Child? Hast thou no rest?"

And then I answer, touched by her look of yearning,
Holding my beating heart and forehead burning,
"Mother, I strove with God, and was hard prest."

(*Arthur O'Shaughnessy.*)

The Appointment

'TIS late; the astronomer in his lonely height,
Exploring all the dark, descries afar
Orbs that like distant isles of splendor are,
And mornings whitening in the infinite.

Like winnowed grain the worlds go by in flight,
Or swarm in glistening spaces nebular;
He summons one disheveled wandering star,-
Return ten centuries hence on such a night.

The star will come. It dare not by one hour
Cheat Science, or falsify her calculation;
Men will have passed, but watchful in the tower

Man shall remain in sleepless contemplation;
And should all men have perished there in turn,
Truth in their place would watch that star's return.
(Arthur O'Shaughnessy.)

ALPHONSE DAUDET (1840-1897)

Three Days of Vintage

I MET her one day in the harvest of vines.
Her dainty foot peeped neath the kirtle that swung,
Unconfined by the fillet her loose tresses hung:
Eyes pure as an angel's, lips rosy as wine's.

Pressed close to the arm of a lover she clung,
And the fields of Avignon they wandered among
In the harvest of vines.

. . . . .

I met her one day in the harvest of vines.
The plains lay aslumber, the sky shed no light;
She wandered alone, as one trembling with fright;
And her look was like wildfire that flickers and shines.

I thrill with the vision that rose on my sight
When I saw thee, dear phantom, so frail and so white,
In the harvest of vines.

. . . . .

I met her one day in the harvest of vines.
And sad in my dreams is the memory thereof.

. . . . .

The pall was of velvet like plumes of a dove;
Thus an ebony casket the pale pearl enshrines.
And the nuns of Avignon bent weeping above . . .

Too heavily clustered the grapes . . . and so Love
Reaped the harvest of vines.
(W. J. Robertson.)

EMILE ZOLA (1840-1902)

My Wishes

MY wish would be . . . where uplands gleam
When sunny May shines on the meadow,
A little hut that throws its shadow
In the clear mirror of a stream.

A hidden nest among the myrtles,
To which no footpaths wind their tracks;
A nest that all companion lacks
Save only nests of snow-white turtles.

My wish would be . . . where vision ends
And the gray rock towers up to Heaven,
A bosk of pines whence breathes at even
A song that with the zephyr blends;

Far-widening thence, a chain of valleys,
Where sportive rivers wind and stray
And, wandering with capricious play,
Shine white across the green-leaved alleys;

Or where dusk olive-trees that lean
In dreams their hoary heads discover,
Or wild vines, like a wanton lover,
Climbing along the slopes are seen.

My wish would be . . . for royal palace,
Reached by a pathway from my door,
A bower with roses blossomed o'er
And closed in like a wild-flower's chalice:

A mossy carpet soft and sweet,
With lavender and thyme made gracious,
A dainty lordship, scarce so spacious
As garden spanned by children's feet.

My wish would be . . . in that lone shelter,
  Filled with the forms my fancy weaves,
  To watch, beneath the clustering leaves,
My dreams around me float and welter.

But more than all my wish would be . . .
  And lacking that I laugh at power . . .
  A queen, to share the crown, with dower
Of golden tresses floating free;

A queen of love whose voice is tender,
  Whose pensive brow shades liquid eyes,
  Fresh from whose tread the soft flowers rise,
Because her foot is light and slender.

(W. J. Robertson.)

CATULLE MENDÉS (1841-1909)

The Disciple

WITH hands that touched his toes the Bouddha dreamed.

Said Poorna: Like the winds are souls redeemed,
ee as north winds in sky no clouds bedim;
erefore, o'er rocks I'll climb, through rivers swim
further tribes beneath the furthest heaven;
at souls be comforted and sins forgiven,
aster, thy helpful creed I'll bear abroad.

But if these tribes, answered the Son of God,
sult thee, child beloved, what wilt thou say?

That with a virtuous soul endowed are they,
nce they have blinded not these lids with sand,
or raised, to smite me, either stone or hand.

But if they smite thee, then, with hand or stone?

—These folk, I'll say, to gentleness are prone,
Because their hands, thus filled with stones to fling
Against me, stave nor sword are brandishing.

—But if their steel doth reach thee?

—I will say,
How soft their blows, that wound and do not slay.

—But if thou die?

—Happy who cease to live!

—Go forth, said Bouddha, comfort and forgive.

(W. J. Robertson.)

The Mother

WHEN the Lord fashioned man, the Lord his God
Took not the human clay from one sole clod;
But earth from the four corners of the world:
South, where on burning winds the sand is whirled;
The green-leaved East; the chill North, hoar with frost;
The West, where shattered oaks and ships are tossed
In whirlwind and eclipse and earthquake gloom;
Lest anywhere the Earth, that is Man's tomb,
Should say to him, the weary traveler
With drooping head, who fain would rest in her
"Away! What man art thou, I know thee not!"
But that his mother earth, in every spot
Where he would lay his heart, by hope beguiled,
Should say: "Sleep in my bosom, O my child!"

(W. J. Robertson.)

STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ (1842-1898)

Sigh

MY soul, calm sister, towards thy brow, whereon scarce grieves
An autumn strewn already with its russet leaves,

And towards the wandering sky of thine angelic eyes,
Mounts, as in melancholy gardens may arise
Some faithful fountain sighing whitely towards the blue!
Towards the blue, pale and pure, that sad October knew,
When, in those depths, it mirrored languors infinite,
And agonizing leaves upon the waters white,
Windily drifting, traced a furrow cold and dun,
Where, in one long last ray, lingered the yellow sun.

(*Arthur Symons.*)

Sea-Wind

THE flesh is sad, alas! and all the books are read.
Flight, only flight! I feel that birds are wild to tread
The floor of unknown foam, and to attain the skies!
Nought, neither ancient gardens mirrored in the eyes,
Shall hold this heart that bathes in waters its delight,
O nights! nor yet my waking lamp, whose lonely light
Shadows the vacant paper, whiteness profits best,
Nor the young wife who rocks her baby on her breast.
I will depart! O steamer, swaying rope and spar,
Lift anchor for exotic lands that lie afar!
A weariness, outworn by cruel hopes, still clings
To the last farewell handkerchief's last beckonings!
And are not these, the masts inviting storms, not these
That an awakening wind bends over wrecking seas,
Lost, not a sail, a sail, a flowering isle, ere long?
But, O my heart, hear thou, hear thou, the sailors' song!

(Arthur Symons.)

Anguish

TO-NIGHT I do not come to conquer thee,
O Beast that dost the sins of the whole world bear,
Nor with my kisses' weary misery
Wake a sad tempest in thy wanton hair;
It is that heavy and that dreamless sleep

I ask of the close curtains of thy bed,
Which, after all thy treacheries, folds thee deep,
Who knowest oblivion better than the dead.
For Vice, that gnaws with keener tooth than time
Brands me as thee, of barren conquest proud;
But while thou guardest in thy breast of stone
A heart that fears no fang of any crime,
I wander palely, haunted by my shroud,
Fearing to die if I but sleep alone.

(Arthur Symons.)

JOSÉ-MARIA DE HEREDIA (1842-1905)

The Flute: A Pastoral

EVENING! A flight of pigeons in clear sky!
What wants there to allay love's fever now,
Goatherd! but that thy pipe should overflow,
While through the reeds the river murmurs by?
Here in the plane-tree's shadow where we lie
Deep grows the grass and cool. Sit and allow
The wandering goat to scale your rocky brow
And graze at will, deaf to the weanling's cry.

My flute—a simple thing, seven oaten reeds
Glued with a little wax—sings, plains, or pleads
In accents deep or shrill as I require;
Come! thou shalt learn Silenius' sacred art,
And through this channel breath'd will fierce desire
Rise, wing'd with music, from the o'er-labored heart.

(A. J. C. Grierson.)

FRANCOIS COPPÉE (1842-1908)

The Three Birds

I SAID to the ringdove that fluttered above me:
"Fly farther than meadows and barley-fields are
"And bring me the flower that shall woo her to love me":
The ringdove said only: "Too far!"

said to the eagle: "I count on thy pinions;
"Help, help me to ravish the fire from yon sky!
If haply the spell be in starry dominions":
The eagle said only: "Too high!"

Devour then"—I said to the vulture that tare it—
"This heart that is full of her love, but if fate
Hath left but one atom untouched thou shalt spare it":
The vulture said only: "Too late."

(W. J. Robertson.)

On a Tomb in Spring-Time

THE lone cross moulders in the graveyard hoary,
But April weaves again her leafy bower;
The redwing nestles there, and with sweet flower
A rosebush hides the sign of grief in glory.

No tear, no prayer, breathes such *memento mori*
As sobbing nightingale and dewy shower
These scents, these songs, these splendors are the dower
Of Earth that thrills with Love's immortal story.

Dead and forgotten one! whose human pride
Dreamed, doubtless, dreams of life's eternal tide
In Paradise, where the freed spirit reposes;

Hast thou not here to-day a lovelier doom
If now thy soul, diffused about this tomb,
Sings with the birds, and blossoms in the roses?

(W. J. Robertson.)

PAUL VERLAINE (1844-1896)

Il Pleut Doucement Sur La Ville

TEARS fall within mine heart,
As rain upon the town:
Whence does this languor start,
Possessing all mine heart?

O sweet fall of the rain
Upon the earth and roof,
Unto an heart in pain,
O music of the rain.

Tears that have no reason
Fall in my sorry heart:
What, there was no treason?
This grief hath no reason.

Nay, the more desolate,
Because, I know not why,
(Neither for love nor hate)
Mine heart is desolate.

(Ernest Dowson.)

Colloque Sentimental

INTO the lonely park all frozen fast,
Awhile ago there were two forms who passed.

Lo, are their lips fallen and their eyes dead,
Hardly shall a man hear the words he said.

Into the lonely park all frozen fast,
There came two shadows who recall the past.

"Dost thou remember our old ecstasy?"
"Wherefore should I possess that memory?"—

"Doth thine heart beat at my sole name alway?
Still dost thou see my soul in visions?" "Nay."—

"They were fair days of joy unspeakable,
Whereon our lips were joined?"—"I cannot tell."—

"Were not the heavens blue, was not hope high?"—
"Hope was fled vanquished down the darkling sky."

So through the barren oats they wandered,
And the night only heard the words they said.

(Ernest Dowson.)

Spleen

AROUND were all the roses red,
The ivy all around was black.

Dear, so thou only move thine head,
Shall all mine old despairs awake.

Too blue, too tender was the sky,
The air too soft, too green the sea

Always I fear, I know not why,
Some lamentable flight from thee.

I am so tired of holly-sprays
And weary of the bright box-tree,

Of all the endless country ways;
Of everything alas, save thee.

(Ernest Dowson.)

The Sky Is Up Above the Roof

THE sky is up above the roof
So blue, so soft.
A tree there, up above the roof,
Swayeth aloft.

A bell within that sky we see,
Chimes low and faint;
A bird upon that tree we see,
Maketh complaint.

Dear God, is not the life up there
Simple and sweet?
How peacefully are borne up there
Sounds of the street.

What hast thou done, who comest here,
To weep alway?
Where hast thou laid, who comest here,
Thy youth away?

(Ernest Dowson.)

Parsifal

WEARY and pale as death from that great fray
Which rolled the seas of battle far and wide,
He stands without his tent ere fall of day.

And leans upon that Lance which pierced the side,
The virgin vanquisher of death and shame,
Clean from their blood who ere the dark have died.

In robe of gold, with eyes of stillest flame,
He worships through its chalice, crystal clear,
The awful wine from age the same.

O gentle stripling without stain or fear,
Scattering my thoughts like carrion shapes that fly,
Splendid in the dark place, what dost thou here?

Lovely he stands in quivering panoply,
So that my trembling fingers barely touch
Those scarred boys' hands intense with purity.

(Cuthbert Wright.)

A Clymene

MYSTICAL strains unheard,
A song without a word,
Dearest, because thine eyes,
Pale as the skies,

Because thy voice, remote
As the far clouds that float
Veiling for me the whole
Heaven of the soul.

Because the stately scent
Of thy swan's whiteness, blent
With the white lily's bloom
Of thy perfume,

Ah, because thy dear love,
The music breathed above
By angels halo-crowned,
Odor and sound,

Hath, in my subtle heart,
With some mysterious art
Transposed thy harmony,
So let it be.

(Arthur Symons.)

L'Amour Par Terrea

THE wind the other evening overthrew
The little Love who smiled so mockingly
Down that mysterious alley, so that we,
Remembering, mused thereon a whole day through.

The wind has overthrown him. The poor stone
Lies scattered to the breezes. It is sad
To see the lonely pedestal, that had
The artist's name, scarce visible, alone,

Oh, it is sad to see the pedestal
Left lonely, and in dream I seem to hear
Prophetic voices whisper in my ear
The lonely and despairing end of all.

Oh, it is sad. And thou hast not found
One heart-throb for the pity, though thine eye
Lights at the gold and purple butterfly
Brightening the littered leaves upon the ground?

(Arthur Symons.)

Fantoches

SCARAMOUCHE waves a threatening hand
To Pulcinella, and they stand,
Two shadows, black against the moon.

The old doctor of Bologna pries
For simples with impassive eyes,
And mutters o'er a magic rune.

The while his daughter, scarce half-dressed,
Glides slyly 'neath the trees, in quest
Of her bold pirate lover's sail;

Her pirate from the Spanish main,
Whose passion thrills her in the pain
Of the loud languorous nightingale.

(Arthur Symons.)

Pantomime

PIERROT, no sentimental swain,
Washes a pâté down again
With furtive flagons, white and red.

Cassandre, to chasten his content,
Greets with a tear of sentiment
His nephew disinherited.

That blackguard of a Harlequin
Pirouettes, and plots to win
His Colombine that flits and flies.

Colombine dreams, and starts to find
A sad heart sighing in the wind,
And in her heart a voice that sighs.

(Arthur Symons.)

Les Indolents

(Fêtes Galantes)

BAH, spite of Fate, that says us nay,
Suppose we die together, eh?
—A rare conclusion you discover.

—What's rare is good. Let us die so,
Like lovers in Boccaccio.
—Hi, hi, hi, you fantastic lover.

—Nay, not fantastic. If you will,
Fond, surely irreproachable.
Suppose, then, that we die together?

—Good sir, your jests are fitlier told
Than when you speak of love and gold.
Why speak at all, in this glad weather?

Whereat, behold them once again,
Torcis beside his Dorimène,
Not far from two blithe rustic rovers,

For some caprice of idle breath
Deferring a delicious death.
Hi, hi, hi, what fantastic lovers.

(Arthur Symons.)

Cythere

(Fêtes Galantes)

BY favorable breezes fanned,
A trellised arbor is at hand
To shield us from the summer airs;

The scent of roses, fainting sweet,
Afloat upon the summer heat,
Blends with the perfume that she wears.

True to the promise her eyes gave,
She ventures all, and her mouth rains
A dainty fever through my veins;

And Love, fulfilling all things, save
Hunger, we 'scape, with sweets and ices,
The folly of Love's sacrifices.

(Arthur Symons.)

Dans l'Allée

(Fêtes Galantes)

AS in the age of shepherd king and queen,
Painted and frail amid her nodding bows,
Under the somber branches, and between
The green and mossy garden-ways she goes,
With little mincing airs one keeps to pet
A darling and provoking perroquet.
Her long-trained robe is blue, the fan she holds
With fluent fingers girt with heavy rings,
So vaguely hints of vague erotic things
That her eye smiles, musing among its folds.
—Blonde too, a tiny nose, a rosy mouth,
Artful as that sly patch that makes more sly,
In her divine unconscious pride of youth,
The slightly simpering sparkle of the eye.

(Arthur Symons.)

Mandoline

(Fêtes Galantes.)

THE singers of serenades
Whisper their faded vows
Unto fair listening maids
Under the singing boughs.

Tircis, Aminte, are there,
Clitandre has waited long,
And Damis for many a fair
Tyrant makes many a song.

Their short vests, silken and bright,
Their long pale silken trains,
Their elegance of delight,
Twine soft blue silken chains.

And the mandolines and they,
Faintlier breathing, swoon
Into the rose and gray
Ecstasy of the moon.

(Arthur Symons.)

Clair De Lune

(Fêtes Galantes.)

YOUR soul is a sealed garden, and there go
With masque and bergamasque fair companies
Playing on lutes and dancing and as though
Sad under their fantastic fripperies.

Though they in minor keys go carolling
Of love the conqueror and of live boon
They seem to doubt the happiness they sing
And the song melts into the light of the moon,

The sad light of the moon, so lovely fair
That all the birds dream in the leafy shade
And the slim fountains sob into the air
Among the marble statues in the glade.

(Arthur Symons.)

Sur l'Herbe

(Fêtes Galantes.)

THE Abbé wanders.—Marquis, now
Set straight your periwig, and speak!
—This Cyprus wine is heavenly, how
Much less, Camargo, than your cheek!

—My goddess . . . —Do, mi, sol, la, si.
—Abbé, such treason who'll forgive you?
—May I die, Ladies, if there be
A star in heaven I will not give you!

—I'd be my lady's lapdog; then . . .
—Shepherdess, kiss your shepherd soon,
Shepherd, come kiss . . . —Well, gentlemen?
—Do, mi, so.—Hey, good-night, good moon!

(Arthur Symons.)

A la Promenade

(Fêtes Galantes.)

THE sky so pale, and the trees, such frail things,
Seem as if smiling on our bright array
That flits so light and gray upon the way
With indolent airs and fluttering as of wings..

The fountain wrinkles under a faint wind,
And all the sifted sunlight falling through
The lime-trees of the shadowy avenue
Comes to us blue and shadowy-pale and thinned.

Faultlessly fickle, and yet fond enough,
With fond hearts not too tender to be free,
We wander whispering deliciously,
And every lover leads a lady-love,

Whose imperceptible and roguish hand
Darts now and then a dainty tap, the lip
Revenges on an extreme finger-tip,
The tip of the left little finger, and,

The deed being so excessive and uncouth,
A duly freezing look deals punishment,
That in the instant of the act is blent
With a shy pity pouting in the mouth.

(Arthur Symons.)

Dans La Grotte

(Fêtes Galantes.)

STAY, let me die, since I am true,
For my distress will not delay,
And the Hyrcanian tigress ravening for prey
Is as a little lamb to you.

Yes, here within, cruel Clymène,
This steel which in how many wars
How many a Cyrus slew, or Scipio, now prepares
To end my life and end my pain.

But nay, what need of steel have I
To haste my passage to the shades?
Did not love pierce my heart, beyond all mortal aids,
With the first arrow of your eye?

(Arthur Symons.)

Les Ingénus

(Fêtes Galantes.)

HIGH heels and long skirts intercepting them,
So that, according to the wind or way,
An ankle peeped and vanished as in play;
And well we loved the malice of the game.

Sometimes an insect with its jealous sting
Some fair one's whiter neck disquieted,
From which the gleams of sudden whiteness shed
Met in our eyes a frolic welcoming.

The stealthy autumn evening faded out,
And the fair creatures dreaming by our side
Words of such subtle savor to us sighed
That since that time our souls tremble and doubt.

(Arthur Symons.)

Cortège

(Fêtes Galantes.)

A SILVER-vested monkey trips
And pirouettes before the face
Of one who twists a kerchief's lace
Between her well-gloved finger-tips.

A little negro, a red elf,
Carries her drooping train, and holds
At arm's-length all the heavy folds,
Watching each fold displace itself.

The monkey never lets his eyes
Wander from the fair woman's breast,
White wonder that to be possessed
Would call a god out of the skies.

Sometimes the little negro seems
To lift his sumptuous burden up
Higher than need be, in the hope
Of seeing what all night he dreams.

She goes by corridor and stair,
Still to the insolent appeals
Of her familiar animals
Indifferent or unaware.

(Arthur Symons.)

Les Coquillages

(Fêtes Galantes.)

EACH shell incrusted in the grot
Where we two loved each other well
An aspect of its own has got.

The purple of a purple shell
Is our souls' color when they make
Our burning heart's blood visible.

This pallid shell affects to take
Thy languors, when thy love-tired eyes
Rebuke me for my mockery's sake.

This counterfeits the harmonies
Of thy pink ear, and this might be
Thy plump short nape with rosy dyes.

But one, among these, troubled me.

(Arthur Symons.)

En Patinant

(Fêtes Galantes.)

WE were the victims, you and I,
Madame, of mutual self deceits;
And that which set our brains awry
May well have been the summer heats.

And the spring too, if I recall,
Contributed to spoil our play,
And yet its share, I think, was small
In leading you and me astray.

For air in springtime is so fresh
That rose-buds Love has surely meant
To match the roses of the flesh.
Have odors almost innocent;

And even the lilies that outpour
Their biting odors where the sun
Is new in heaven, do but the more
Enliven and enlighten one,

So stealthily the zephyr blows
A mocking breath that renders back
The heart's rest and the soul's repose
And the flowers aphrodisiac,

And the five senses, peeping out,
Take up their station at the feast,
But, being by themselves, without
Troubling the reason in the least.

That was the time of azure skies,
(Madame, do you remember it?)
And sonnets to my lady's eyes,
And cautions kisses not too sweet.

Free from all passion's idle pother,
Full of mere kindliness, how long,
How well we liked not loved each other,
Without one rapture or one wrong!

Ah, happy hours! But summer came;
Farewell, fresh breezes of the spring!
A wind of pleasure like a flame
Leapt on our senses wondering

Strange flowers, fair crimson-hearted flowers,
Poured their ripe odors over us,
And evil voices of the hours
Whispered above us in the boughs.

We yield to it all, ah me!
What vertigo of fools held fast
Our senses in its ecstasy
Until the heat of summer passed?

There were vain tears and vainer laughter,
And hands indefinitely pressed,
Moist sadnesses, and swoonings after,
And what vague void within the breast?

But autumn came to our relief,
Its light grown cold, its gusts grown rough,
Came to remind us, sharp and brief,
That we had wantoned long enough,

And led us quickly to recover
The elegance demanded of
Every quite irreproachable lover
And leave us toiling in their wake.

Now it is winter, and alas,
Our backers tremble for their stake;
Already other sledges pass
And leave us toiling in their wake.

Put both your hands into your muff,
Sit back now, steady! off we go.
Fanchon will tell us soon enough
Whatever news there is to know.

(Arthur Symons.)

En Bateau

(Fêtes Galantes.)

THE shepherd's star with trembling glint
Drops in black water; at the hint
The pilot fumbles for his flint.

Now is the time, or never, sirs.
No hand that wanders wisely errs:
I touch a hand, and is it hers?

The Knightly Atys strikes the strings,
And to the faithless Chloris flings
A look that speaks of many things.

The Abbé has absolved again
Eglé, the viscount all in vain
Has given his hasty heart the rein.

Meanwhile the moon is up and streams
Upon the skiff that flies and seems
To float upon a tide of dreams.

(Arthur Symons.)

Le Faune

(Fêtes Galantes.)

AN aged faun of old red clay
Laughs from the grassy bowling-green,
Foretelling doubtless some decay
Of mortal moments so serene

That lead us lightly on our way
(Love's piteous pilgrims have we been!)
To this last hour that runs away
Dancing to the tambourine.

(Arthur Symons.)

Lettre

(Fêtes Galantes.)

FAR from your side removed by thankless cares
(The gods are witness when a lover swears)
I languish and I die, Madame, as still
My use is, which I punctually fulfill,
And go, through heavy-hearted woes conveyed,
Attended ever by your lovely shade,
By day in thought, by night in dreams of hell,
So that at length my dwindling body lost
In very soul, I too become a ghost,
I too, and in the lamentable stress
Of vain desires remembering happiness,
Remembered kisses, now, alas, unfelt,
My shadow shall into your shadow melt.

Meanwhile, dearest, your most obedient slave.

How does the sweet society behave,
Thy cat, thy dog, thy parrot? and is she
Still, as of old, the black-eyed Silvanie
(I had loved black eyes if thine had not been blue)
Who ogled me at moments, palsambleu!
Thy tender friend and thy sweet confidant?
One dream there is, Madame, long wont to haunt
This too impatient heart: to put the earth
And all its treasures (of how little worth!)
Before your feet as tokens of a love
Equal to the most famous flames that move
The hearts of men to conquer all but death.

Cleopatra was less loved, yes, on my faith,
By Antony or Cæsar than you are,
Madame, by me, who truly would by far
Out-do the deeds of Cæsar for a smile,
O Cleopatra, Queen of word and wile,
Or, for a kiss, take flight with Antony.

With this, farewell, dear, and no more from me;
How can the time it takes to read it, quite
Be worth the trouble that it took to write?

(Arthur Symons.)

Colombine

(Fêtes Galantes.)

THE foolish Leander,
Cape-covered Cassander,
And which
Is Pierrot? 'Tis he
With the hop of the flea
Leaps the ditch;

And Harlequin who
Rehearses anew
His sly task,
With his dress that's a wonder,
And eyes shining under
His mask;

Mi, sol, mi, fa, do!
How gayly they go,
And they sing
And they laugh and they twirl
Round the feet of a girl
Like the spring,

Whose eyes are as green
As a cat's are, and keen

As its claws,
And her eyes without frown
Bid all new-comers: Down
With your paws!

On they go with the force
Of the stars in their course,
And the speed:
O tell me toward what
Disaster unthought,
Without heed

The implacable fair,
A rose in her hair,
Holding up
Her skirts as she runs
Leads this dance of the dunce
And the dupe?

(Arthur Symons.)

En Sourdine

(Fêtes Galantes.)

CALM where twilight leaves have stilled
With their shadow light and sound,
Let our silent love be filled
With a silence as profound.

Let our ravished senses blend
Heart and spirit, thine and mine,
With vague languors that descend
From the branches of the pine.

Close thine eyes against the day,
Fold thine arms across thy breast,
And for ever turn away
All desire of all but rest.

Let the lulling breaths that pass
In soft wrinkles at thy feet,
Tossing all the tawny grass,
This and only this repeat.

And when solemn evening
Dims the forest's dusky air,
Then the nightingale shall sing
The delight of our despair.

(Arthur Symons.)

Soleils Couchants

(From Poèmes Saturniens.)

PALE dawn delicately
Over earth has spun
The sad melancholy
Of the setting sun.
Sad melancholy
Brings oblivion
In sad songs to me
With the setting sun.
And the strangest dreams,
Dreams like sun that set
On the banks of the streams,
Ghost and glory met,
To my sense it seems,
Pass, and without let,
Like great suns that set
On the banks of streams.

(Arthur Symons.)

Chansons d'Automne

(From Poèmes Saturniens.)

WHEN a sighing begins
In the violins
Of the autumn-song,

My heart is drowned
In the slow sound
Languorous and long.

Pale as with pain,
Breath fails me when
The hour tolls deep.
My thoughts recover
The days that are over,
And I weep.

And I go
Where the winds know,
Broken and brief,
To and fro,
As the winds blow
A dead leaf.

(Arthur Symons.)

Femme Et Chatte

(From Poèmes Saturniens.)

THEY were at play, she and her cat,
And it was marvelous to mark
The white paw and the white hand pat
Each other in the deepening dark.

The stealthy little lady hid
Under her mittens' silken sheath
Her deadly agate nails that thrid
The silk-like dagger-points of death.

The cat purred primly and drew in
Her claws that were of steel filed thin:
The devil was in it all the same.

And in the boudoir, while a shout
Of laughter in the air rang out,
Four sparks of phosphor shone like flame.

(Arthur Symons.)

From La Bonne Chanson

I

THE white moon sits
And seems to brood
Where a swift voice flits
From each branch in the wood
That in the tree-tops cover . . .

O lover, my lover!

The pool in the meadows
Like a looking-glass
Casts back the shadows
That over it pass
Of the willow-bower. . . .

Let us dream: 'tis the hour. . .

A tender and vast
Lull of content
Like a cloud is cast
From the firmament
Where one planet is bright. . . .
'Tis the hour of delight.

(Arthur Symons.)

II

THE fireside, the lamp's little narrow light;
The dream with head on hand, and the delight
Of eyes that lose themselves in loving looks;
The hour of steaming tea and of shut books;
The solace to know evening almost gone;
The dainty weariness of waiting on
The nuptial shadow and night's softest bliss;
Ah, it is this that without respite, this
That without say, my tender fancy seeks,
Mad with the months and furious with the weeks.

(Arthur Symons.)

From Romances sans Paroles

I

'TIS the ecstasy of repose,
'Tis love when tired lids close,
'Tis the wood's long shuddering
In the embrace of the wind,
'Tis where gray boughs are thinned,
Little voices that sing.

O fresh and frail is the sound
That twitters above, around,
Like the sweet, tiny sigh
That lies in the shaken grass;
Or the sound when waters pass
And the pebbles shrink and cry.

What soul is this that complains
Over the sleeping plains,
And what is it that it saith?
Is it mine, is it thine,
This lowly hymn I divine
In the warm night, low as a breath?

(Arthur Symons.)

II

I DIVINE, through the veil of a murmuring,
The subtle contour of voices gone,
And I see, in the glimmering lights that sing,
The promise, pale love, of a future dawn.

And my soul and my heart in trouble
What are they but an eye that sees,
As through a mist an eye sees double,
Airs forgotten of songs like these?

O to die of no other dying,
Love, than this that computes the showers
Of old hours and of new hours flying:
O to die of the swing of the hours!

(Arthur Symons.)

III

A FRAIL hand in the rose-gray evening
Kisses the shining keys that hardly stir,
While, with the light, small flutter of a wing,
And old song, like an old tired wanderer,
Goes very softly, as if trembling,
About the room long redolent of Her.

What lullaby is this that comes again
To dandle my poor being with its breath?
What wouldst thou have of me, gay laughing strain?
What hadst thou, desultory faint refrain
That now into the garden to thy death
Floatest through the half-opened window-pane?

(Arthur Symons.)

IV

O SAD, sad was my soul, alas!
For a woman! a woman's sake it was.

I have had no comfort since that day,
Although my heart went its way,

Although my heart and my soul went
From the woman into banishment.

I have had no comfort since that day,
Although my heart went its way.

And my heart, being sore in me,
Said to my soul: How can this be.

How can this be or have been thus,
This proud, sad banishment of us?

My soul said to my heart: Do I
Know what snare we are tangled by,

Seeing that, banished, we know not whether
We are divided or together?

(Arthur Symons.)

V

WEARILY the plain's
Endless length expands;
The snow shines like grains
Of the shifting sands.

Light of day is none,
Brazen is the sky;
Overhead the moon
Seems to live and die.

Where the woods are seen,
Gray the oak-trees lift
Through the vaporous screen
Like the clouds that drift.

Light of day is none,
Brazen is the sky;
Overhead the moon
Seems to live and die.

Broken-winded crow,
And you, lean wolves, when
The sharp north-winds blow,
What do you do then?

Wearily the plain's
Endless length expands;
The snow shines like grains
Of the shifting sands.

(Arthur Symons.)

VI

THERE'S a flight of green and red
In the hurry of hills and rails,
Through the shadowy twilight shed
By the lamps as daylight pales.

Dim gold light flushes to blood
In humble hollows far down;
Birds sing low from a wood
Of barren trees without crown.

Scarcely more to be felt
Than that autumn is gone;
Languors, lulled in me, melt
In the still air's monotone.

(Arthur Symons.)

VII

THE roses were all red,
The ivy was all black:
Dear, if you turn your head,
All my despairs come back.

The sky was too blue, too kind,
The sea too green, and the air
Too calm: and I know in my mind
I shall wake and not find you there.

I am tired of the box-tree's shine
And the holly's, that never will pass,
And the plain's unending line,
And all but you, alas.

(Arthur Symons.)

VIII

DANCE the jig!
I loved best her pretty eyes
Clearer than stars in any skies,
I loved her eyes for their dear lies.

Dance the jig!

And ah! the ways, the ways she had
Of driving a poor lover mad:
It made a man's heart sad and glad.

Dance the jig!

But now I find the old kisses shed
From her flower-mouth a rarer red
Now that her heart to mine is dead.

Dance the jig!

And I recall, now I recall
Old days and hours, and ever shall,
And that is best, and best of all.

Dance the jig!

(Arthur Symons.)

I. Art Poetique

(From Jadis et Naguère.)

MUSIC first and foremost of all!
Choose your measure of odd not even,
Let it melt in the air of heaven,
Pose not, poise not, but rise and fall.

Choose your words, but think not whether
Each to other of old belong:
What so dear as the dim gray song
Where clear and vague are joined together?

'Tis veils of beauty for beautiful eyes,
'Tis the trembling light of the naked noon,
'Tis a medley of blue and gold, the moon
And stars in the cool of autumn skies.

Let every shape of its shade be born;
Color, away! come to me, shade!
Only of shade can the marriage be made
Of dream with dream and of flute with horn.

Shun the Point, lest death with it come,
Unholy laughter and cruel wit
(For the eyes of the angels weep at it)
And all the garbage of scullery-scum.

Take Eloquence, and wring the neck of him!
You had better, by force, from time to time,
Put a little sense in the head of Rhyme:
If you watch him not, you will be at the beck of him.

O, who shall tell us the wrongs of Rhyme?
What witless savage or what deaf boy
Has made for us this two-penny toy
Whose bells ring hollow and out of time?

Music always and music still!
Let your verse be the wandering thing
That flutters in the light from a soul on the wing
Towards other skies at a new whim's will.

Let your verse be the luck of the lure
Afloat on the winds that at morning hint
Of the odors of thyme and the savor of mint . . .
And all the rest is literature.

(Arthur Symons.)

II. Mezzetin Chantant

(From Jadis et Naguère.)

GO, and with never a care
But the care to keep happiness!
Crumple a silken dress
And snatch a song in the air.

Hear the moral of all the wise
In a world where happy folly
Is wiser than melancholy:
Forget the hour as it flies!

The one thing needful on earth, it
Is not to be whimpering.
Is life after all a thing
Real enough to be worth it?

(Arthur Symons.)

From Sagesse

I

THE little hands that once were mine,
The hands I loved, the lovely hands,
After the roadways and the strands,
And realms and kingdoms once divine,

And mortal loss of all that seems
Lost with the old sad pagan things,
Royal as in the days of kings
The dear hands open to my dreams.

Hands of dream, hands of holy flame
Upon my soul in blessing laid,
What is it that these hands have said
That my soul hears and swoons to them?

Is it a phantom, this pure sight
Of mother's love made tenderer,
Of spirit with spirit linked to share
The mutual kinship of delight?

Good sorrow, dear remorse, and ye,
Blest dreams, O hands ordained of heaven
To tell me if I am forgiven,
Make but the sign that pardons me!

(Arthur Symons.)

II

O MY God, thou hast wounded me with love,
Behold the wound, that is still vibrating,
O my God, thou hast wounded me with love.

O my God, thy fear hath fallen upon me,
Behold the burn is there, and it throbs aloud,
O my God, thy fear hath fallen upon me.

O my God, I have known that all is vile
And that thy glory hath stationed itself in me,
O my God, I have known that all is vile.

Drown my soul in floods, floods of thy wine,
Mingle my life with the body of thy bread,
Drown my soul in floods, floods of thy wine.

Take my blood, that I have not poured out,
Take my flesh unworthy of suffering,
Take my blood, that I have not poured out.

Take my brow, that has only learned to blush,
To be the footstool of thine adorable feet,
Take my brow, that has only learned to blush.

Take my hands, because they have labored not
For coals of fire and for rare frankincense,
Take my hands, because they have labored not.

Take my heart, that has beaten for vain things,
To throb under the thorns of Calvary,
Take my heart, that has beaten for vain things.

Take my feet, frivolous travelers,
That they may run to the crying of thy grace,
Take my feet, frivolous travelers.

Take my voice, a harsh and a lying noise,
For the reproaches of thy Penitence,
Take my voice, a harsh and a lying noise.

Take mine eyes, luminaries of deceit,
That they may be extinguished in the tears of prayer,
Take mine eyes, luminaries of deceit.

Alas, thou, God of pardon and promises,
What is the pit of mine ingratitude,
Alas, thou, God of pardon and promises.

God of terror and God of holiness,
Alas, my sinfulness is a black abyss,
God of terror and God of holiness.

Thou, God of peace, of joy and delight,
All my tears, all my ignorances,
Thou, God of peace, of joy and delight.

Thou, O God, knowest all this, all this,
How poor I am, poorer than any man,
Thou, O God, knowest all this, all this.

And what I have, my God, I give to thee.

(Arthur Symons.)

III

SLUMBER dark and deep
Falls across my life;
I will put to sleep
Hope, desire and strife.

All things pass away,
Good and evil seem
To my soul to-day
Nothing but a dream;

I a cradle laid
In a hollow cave,
By a great hand swayed:
Silence, like the grave.

(Arthur Symons.)

IV

THE body's sadness and the languor thereof
Melt and blow me with pity till I could weep,
Ah! when the dark hours break it down in sleep
And the bedclothes score the skin and the hot hands move;

Alert for a little with the fever of the day,
Damp still with the heavy sweat of the night that has thinned,
Like a bird that trembles on a roof in the wind:
And the feet that are sorrowful because of the way,

And the breast that a hand has scarred with a double blow,
And the mouth that as an open wound is red,
And the flesh that shivers and is a painted show,
And the eyes, poor eyes so lovely with tears unshed
For the sorrow of seeing this also over and done:
Sad body, how weak and how punished under the sun!

(Arthur Symons.)

V

FAIRER is the sea
Than the minster high,
Faithful nurse is she,
And last lullaby,
And the Virgin prays
Over the sea's ways.

Gifts of grief and guerdons
From her bounty come,
And I hear her pardons
Chide her angers home;
Nothing in her is
Unforgivingness.

She is piteous,
She the perilous!
Friendly things to us
The wave sings to us:
You whose hope is past,
Here is peace at last.

And beneath the skies,
Brighter-hued than they,
She has azure dyes,
Rose and green and gray.
Better is the sea
Than all fair things or we.

(Arthur Symons.)

Impression Fausse

(From Parallelement.)

LITTLE lady mouse,
Black upon the gray of light;
Little lady mouse,
Gray upon the night.

Now they ring the bell,
All good prisoners slumber deep;
Now they ring the bell,
Nothing now but sleep.

Only pleasant dreams,
Love's enough for thinking of;

Only pleasant dreams,
Long live love!

Moonlight over all,
Some one snoring heavily;
Moonlight over all
In reality.

Now there comes a cloud,
It is dark as midnight here;
Now there comes a cloud,
Dawn begins to peer.

Little lady mouse,
Rosy in a ray of blue,
Little lăd̆y mouse:
Up now, all of you!

(Arthur Symons.)

From Chansons Pour Elle

YOU believe that there may be
Luck in strangers in the tea:
I believe only in your eyes.

You believe in fairy-tales,
Days one wins and days one fails:
I believe only in your lies.

You believe in heavenly powers,
In some saint to whom one prays
Or in some Ave that one says.

I believe only in the hours,
Colored with the rosy lights
You rain for me on sleepless nights.

And so firmly I receive
These for truth, that I believe
That only for your sake I live.

(Arthur Symons.)

From Epigrammes

WHEN we go together, if I may see her again,
Into the dark wood and the rain;

When we are drunken with air and the sun's delight
At the brink of the river of light;

When we are homeless at last, for a moment's space
Without city or abiding-place;

And if the slow good-will of the world still seem
To cradle us in a dream;

Then let us sleep the last sleep with no leave-taking,
And God will see to the waking.

(Arthur Symons.)

JEAN RICHEPIN (1849-)

The Death of the Gods

SEE! brothers, weak and weary have I striven
Against the Almighty Ones clothed round with fear;
Glorying in impious pride my pledge was given,
And, having ransacked Heaven, lo, I am here!

When I snuffed out the Gods, as one erases
A word, they thundered not nor reasoned why:
You, therefore, shall lift up your prostrate faces
And gaze on these great corpses where they lie.

You, searching Heaven, void as a pauper's fingers,
Shall scorn the phantoms that no more bewitch,
And, free to pluck from hope the flower that lingers,
Shall cast your terrors in the wayside ditch.

You shall tear down the veils of fraud and wonder,
  Finding no Lord beyond Life's utmost bars,
And watch in brooding space, now cloven asunder,
  Beneath the wing of Chance burst forth Stars.

For you the Force of Things in wide dispersal
  Streams, as a shoreless ocean flows,
In endless whirlpool of life universal,
  The whence and why whereof no mortal knows.

You, knowing your own souls lost in infinite numbers,
  Even as a dewdrop plunged in the deep stream,
Shall judge the Gods, those nightmares of man's slumbers,
  In life's vast All as shadows of a dream.

Tranquil, as with a conqueror's calm elation,
  Deceived no more by priests' and preachers' arts,
In this warm coign o' the world's blest habitation
  You shall repose in peace your ransomed hearts.

Good shall be yours, though mixed with evil measure,
  Even as the nursling, the poor vagrant's child
That sucks her breast closes his eyes in pleasure,
  Heedless of wrinkled teats and skin defiled.

Cleansing your souls of every vague desire,
  Your love, on wives' and mothers' flowery lips,
Shall soon forget youth's kiss of frenzied fire
  On shadowy bosoms lost in dim eclipse.

By simple craving that like comfort pleases,
  Renewed at ease and with each morning fresh;
By hope drawn nigh, that small endeavor seizes,
  Your spirits shall live free in the freed flesh.

Longings fulfilled and solace for all sadness
  Shall be your blissful lot, your wonted fare,
So shall ye drink the wine of holiest gladness
  In boundless Beauty and Love that all may share.

No longer shall your hearts dread pale-eyed Sorrow,
  Misshapen Will, Remorse with choking curse;
Living like children careless of the morrow,
  Cradled on Nature's knees, your loving nurse.

Faith's agonies, the barren vows of ages,
  Fantastic superstitions, cruel deeds,
Gospels, Korans, Vedas, those lying pages,
  The time-worn wreckage of Beliefs and Creeds,

Like carrion vultures, hoarse and fierce and savage,
  That hovered on your hearts six thousand years
And with your bleeding flesh glutted their ravage,
  Fouling the air in mockery of your fears,

Baffled and blinded by the morning glory
  And shrieking in the sun's remorseless light,
Shall whirl in confused flock, haggard and hoary,
  As in their dismal swarm the birds of night.

And when at last, with clouds and darkness blended,
  They speed their flight, like a funereal knell
Their ghosts shall hear your laughter vast and splendid
  Exultant from earth's shivering bosom swell.

Then comes the end. Climbing on fanes forsaken
  Wild vines shall hide the doors, like grass on graves;
Dead idol and dead priest no more shall waken,
  Oblivion rolls them under her slow waves.

Alone lost legends live in hearts of lovers
  That wander in the woods of old romance,
Charmed by an echoing voice, that vaguely hovers,
  To linger there awhile in mystic trance.

Even they, losing the names dark generations
  Gave to those bloody specters, when day comes,
Shall hear their echoes, hushed to faint vibrations,
  Die like the muffled roll of distant drums.

Then, when those names that filled the world's loud clarion
Sink like the memory of a vanished clan,
Man's pride shall spring, a rose from God's grown carrion,
For earth has one sole God, and He is Man!

(W. J. Robertson.)

GUY DE MAUPASSANT (1850-1893)

Desires

THE dream of one is to have wings and follow
The soaring heights of space with clamorous cries;
With lissome fingers seize the supple swallow
And lose himself in somber gulfs of skies.

Another would have strength with circling shoulder
To crush the wrestler in his close embrace;
And, not with yielding loins or blood grown colder,
Stop, with one stroke, wild steeds in frantic chase.

What I love best is loveliness corporeal:
I would be beautiful as gods of old;
So from my radiant limbs love immemorial
In hearts of men a living flame should hold.

I would have women love me in wild fashion—
Choose one to-day and with to-morrow change;
Pleased, when I pass, to pluck the flower of passion,
As fruits are plucked when forth the fingers range.

Each leaves upon the lips a different flavor;
These diverse savors bid their sweetness grow.
My fond caress would fly with wandering favor
From dusky locks to locks of golden glow.

But most of all I love the unlooked-for meeting,
Those ardors in the blood loosed by a glance,
The conquests of an hour, as swiftly fleeting,
Kisses exchanged at the sole will of chance.

At daybreak I would dote on the dark charmer,
Whose clasping arms cling close in amorous swoon;
And, lulled at eve by the blonde siren's murmur,
Gaze on her pale brow silvered by the moon.

Then my calm heart, that holds no haunting specter,
Would lightly towards a fresh chimæra haste:
Enough in these delights to sip the nectar,
For in the dregs there lurks a bitter taste.

(W. J. Robertson.)

Revenants

(*From the French*)

AT dead of unseen night ghosts of the departing assembling
Flit to the graves, where each in body had burial.
Ah, then revisiting my sad heart their desolate tomb
Troop the desires and loves vainly buried long ago.

(Robert Bridges.)

ARTHUR RIMBAUD (1854-1891)

Sensation

ON summer evenings blue, pricked by the wheat
On rustic paths the thin grass I shall tread,
And feel its freshness underneath my feet,
And, dreaming, let the wind bathe my bare head.

I shall not speak, nor think, but, walking slow
Through Nature, I shall rove with Love my guide,
As gipsies wander, where, they do not know,
Happy as one walks by a woman's side.

(Jethro Bithell.)

ALBERT SAMAIN (1858-1900)

Music on the Waters

O HARK what the symphony saith,
Nothing is sweet as a death
Of music vague on the breath
That a far, dim landscape is sighing;

The heavy night is drunken,
Our heart that with living is shrunken
In effortless peace is sunken,
And languorously dying.

Between the cloud and the tide,
Under the moon let us glide,
My soul flees the world to hide
In thine eyes where languor is lying.

And I see thine eyeballs swoon,
When the flute weds the bassoon,
As though to a ray of the moon
Two ghostly flowers were replying.

O list what the symphony saith,
Nothing is sweet as the death
Of lip to lip in the breath
Of music vaguely sighing.

(Jethro Bithell.)

Pannyra of the Golden Heel

THE revel pauses and the room is still:
The silver flute invites her with a thrill,
And, buried in her great veils fold and fold,
Rises to dance Pannyra, Heel of Gold.
Her light steps cross; her subtle arm impels
The clinging drapery; it shrinks and swells,

Hollows and floats, and bursts into a whirl:
She is a flower, a moth, a flaming girl.
All lips are silent; eyes are all trance:
She slowly wakes the madness of the dance,
Windy and wild the golden torches burn;
She turns, and swifter yet she tries to turn,
Then stops: a sudden marble stiff she stands.
The veil that round her coiled its spiral bands,
Checked in its course, brings all its folds to rest,
And clinging to bright limb and pointed breast
Shows, as beneath silk waters woven fine,
Pannyra naked in a flash divine!

(*James Elroy Flecker.*)

Summer Hours

I

PROLONG our love's contents
With a pallid wine that gleams
Through glasses the colour of dreams,
And in exasperated scents.

Roses! O roses still!
I love them beyond enduring.
They have the sombre alluring
Of things that we know will kill.

Now summer's gold turns to ashes;
The juice of the peaches you cull
The snow of your bosom splashes.

Dark is the park, without breath . . .
And my heart is aching, and full
Of a sweetness that suffereth.

II

Moon of copper. Air sick with scent . . .
As under a dome lamps do,
Stars burn through a balm of blue;
And in velvet flowers somnolent.

The gardens are close as a tent
That incense sways heavily through.
And the waters are languorous too
On the porphyries' colours blent.

No leaf's shadow will stir . . .
Only your red lips burn
In the lifted torch's light;

And you seem, in the air of the night,
As fatal and hard as the urn
That seals a sepulchre.

III

Great jasmines opened wide
The dusk with odours out-wear . . .
As a bridegroom holds his bare
Utterly fainted bride.

The maddened moth has died
In the torch's golden glare.
In the palpitating air
Your eyes dream, opened wide.

Belovèd, your eyes of green,
In the dusk the perfume exhausts,
Are dreaming of tortures dire;

And your nostrils, quivering keen,
In the stifling scents respire
Hearts' bleeding holocausts.

IV

Flower petals fall.
  Dull flares the torch's mane;
  Mine eyes to weep were fain,
Mine eyes possess thee all.

Yielded beyond recall,
  Heart, naught shall heal thee again,
  O clay moulded into pain . . .
Flower petals fall.

The roses all are dying . . .
I am saying nothing, thou hearest
Under thy motionless hair.

Love is heavy. My soul is sighing . . .
What wing brushes both of us, dearest,
In the sick and soundless air?

(Jethro Bithell.)

Autumn

WE in the lonely walk by custom marred
  Pace once again with steps how burdensome,
  And by a bleeding autumn pale and numb
The opening of the avenue is barred.

As in a hospital or prison yard,
  The air is chastened with a sadness dumb,
  And every golden leaf, its hour being come,
Falls slowly like a memory to the sward.

Between us Silence walks. . . . Our hearts do ail,
Each is out-travelled, and its wasted sail
Selfishly dreams of being homeward bound

But on these evening woods such sadness broods,
Under the sleeping sky our heart its moods
Forgets by calling back the past profound,

With a veiled voice, as a dead child's might sound.
(Jethro Bithell.)

Eventide

UNTO the autumn evening's sadness grave
The panting town exhales its smoke and smut.
Brother of ease, the liver laves the foot
Of ancient towns with legendary wave.

The toilers, that their city labour leave,
Make ring beneath their heels the bridge's stones,
Whose soul, with centuries out-wearied, moans
In the indescribable lassitude of eve.

An unseen hand has blessed the cloud ramparts;
With less of coarseness eye-lids are down-weighted;
And, like a captive long incarcerated,
The soul an instant in its prison starts.

And in soiled faces great eyes fever-wide,
And with a plaintive effort poor burnt eyes
Drink thirstily out of the pensive skies,
And lips are now by silence sanctified.

In heliotrope, with thoughts her fingers hold,
Revery in loosened girdle passes pale,
And brushes spirits with her vaporous trail,
To the rhythm of a music known of old.

The West spills roses on the river wave,
And the wan emotion of the evening dying
Calls up an evening park where dreameth lying
My youth already as a widow grave. . . .

I see them all, the Beauties of the Past,
Robed as my credulous heart dreamed long ago,
Nymphs of the twilight hour they turn round slow,
Upon a distant landscape fading fast.

Caressing, light, as they have ever been,
I see them with the day's flight blend their hair,
And, flitting past me one by one, lay bare
My heart upon an ancient mandoline.

I listen . . . and upon the river's brown,
Below each bridge that frowns like castle-steep,
Sail slow dream-barks, in which dead ladies sleep
By night on ancient perfumes through the town. . . .

(Jethro Bithell.)

Sleepless Night

TO-NIGHT there shall be lighted here no tapers,
But a sheaf of still wet flowers that shake in frailness
Shall light thy chamber—where thy tender paleness
Shall like a dream be drowned in white gauze vapours.

That we may breathe a bliss without alloy,
On the sad piano where the flowers shake
Play thou a song of angels' hearts that ache,
And I shall swoon into a trancèd joy.

So we will love, mute and austere. Save this,
That sometimes on thy slender hand a kiss
Shall be the drop that overflows the urn.

Sister! And in the skies that o'er us bend
The chaste desire of passion taciturn
Shall slowly like a silver star ascend.

(Jethro Bithell.)

Your Memory

YOUR memory is like a book we love,
And which our face is ever bent above;
Our heart read into it the nobler seems,
And all our soul is rich with longing dreams.

The impossible I covet: I would dare
Lock into verse the odour of your hair;
Chisel with goldsmith's patient art the word
Trembling upon your lips and yet unheard;
Prison these waves of tenderness that roll
When your dear voice whips tempests in my soul;
And sing immortally the maddening billows
Tossed in that gulf of breasts that are my pillows;
Say in your eyes what sweets of coolness hide,
Like forest afternoons of autumn-tide;
Enshrine the relic of our dearest hour;
And on piano-keys bring back to flower,
Some melancholy eve when memories rise,
The sacred kiss perfuming still your eyes.

(Jethro Bithell.)

REMY DE GOURMONT (1858-1915)

Hair

THERE is great mystery, Simone,
In the forest of your hair.

It smells of hay, and of the stone
Cattle have been lying on;
Of timber, and of new-baked bread
Brought to be one's breakfast fare;
And of the flowers that have grown
Along a wall abandonèd;
Of leather and of winnowed grain;

Of briers and ivy washed by rain;
You smell of rushes and of ferns
Reaped when day to evening turns;
You smell of withering grasses red
Whose seed is under hedges shed;
You smell of nettles and of broom;
Of milk, and fields in clover-bloom;
You smell of nuts, and fruits that one
Gathers in the ripe season;
And of the willow and the lime
Covered in their flowering time;
You smell of honey, of desire,
You smell of air the noon makes shiver;
You smell of earth and of the river;
You smell of love, you smell of fire.

There is great mystery, Simone,
In the forest of your hair.

(Jethro Bithell.)

GUSTAVE KAHN (1859-)

I Dreamed of a Cruel Lad

I DREAMED of a cruel lad
torturing a little bird he had,
to feel its flanks palpitate.

I dreamed of a world like a mother's breast
with shades of siesta and slow wings fluttering rest,
and alleys of white dreams.

I dreamed as of a sister, chaste, serene,
with the only lips of sweetness that have been,
sister and wife she seems.

(Jethro Bithell.)

My Own

MY own is beautiful as floated perfume is—
The other day she seemed an opening flower—
My own is beautiful as Angels' flesh in springtime—
The other evening all the sun was on my heart—

Save from my own's lips there is no caress—
The spirit's parks are decked below her lips—
In clamour she is the Temple and in the crowd the verge—
The welcoming of my own, the happy season.

The other morning in her sadness was the night of winter—
the voice of my own, the faëry of sounds—
For all my life she is an opening flower—
my own is beautiful as resurrection is.

(Jethro Bithell.)

Homage

THY arms with bracelets I will deck,
and with a string of pearls thy neck,
and with my lips thy lips.

My fever-floods shall bear thy passion-ships,
and I will bid thy courage flare,
with all my soul on flame,

and I will crown thy hair
with acclamations I will tear
from poets put to shame.

And then thy pardon I will ask
for having done so ill my task
of singing thy perfumèd grace,
and queenly beauty of thy face.

(Jethro Bithell.)

The Three Girls on the Sea-Shore

THE three girls on the sea-shore
have seen the Virgin mother passing
along the grave colonnades—
ah! whence came you Virgin mother

I was sitting at the prow
sailing through the storms of waters
steering towards the colonnade
whence your eyes look on the sea

Ah! Virgin mother you are alone
your white robe is like a winding-sheet
you have walked on the waters
to come to the colonnade

I have drowned pilot and skipper
I have drowned the ship and the sailors
because upon the storms upon the waters
they would not believe in my mercy

Ah! Virgin mother our dear smiles
would draw the cord tight round their necks
even to the very cries for mercy
which they would have sent to the sky that is
starred by your passage unto our colonnades

Ah! others my merciful maids
have believed who sleep under the waters
I have drowned pilot and skipper
and all alone I shall haunt the short colonnade
my white robe is like a winding-sheet
Ah! let not your smiles die alone
leave me all alone under the colonnade

(Jethro Bithell.)

JULES LAFORGUE (1860-1887)

For the Book of Love

I MAY be dead to-morrow, uncaressed.
My lips have never touched a woman's, none
Has given me in a look her soul, not one
Has ever held me swooning at her breast.

I have but suffered, for all nature, trees
Whipped by the winds, wan flowers, the ashen sky,
Suffered with all my nerves, minutely, I
Have suffered for my soul's impurities.

And I have spat on love, and, mad with pride,
Slaughtered my flesh, and life's revenge I brave,
And, while the whole world else was Instinct's slave,
With bitter laughter Instinct I defied.

In drawing-rooms, the theater, the church,
Before cold men, the greatest, most refined,
And women with eyes jealous, proud, or kind,
Whose tender souls no lust would seem to smirch,

I thought: This is the end for which they work.
Beasts coupling with the groaning beasts they capture.
And all this dirt for just three minutes' rapture!
Men, be correct! And women, purr and smirk!

(Jethro Bithell.)

HENRI DE REGNIER (1864-)

Night

AN odorous shade lingers the fair day's ghost,
And the frail moon now by no wind is tost,
And shadow-laden scents of tree and grass
Build up again a world our eyes have lost.

Now all the wood is but a murmured light
  Where leaf on leaf falls softly from the height;
The hidden freshness of the river seems
  A breath that mingles with the breath of night.

And time and shade and silence seem to say,
  Close now your eyes nor fear to die with day;
For if the daylight win to earth again,
  Will not its beauty also find a way?

And flower and stream and forest, will they not
  Bring back to-morrow, as to-day they brought,
This shadow-hidden scent—this odorous shade?
  Yea, and with more abiding memories fraught.

(Seumas O'Sullivan.)

"Je Ne Veux de Personne Aupres de ma Tristesse"

SAY, sweet, my grief and I, we may not brook
  Even your light footfall, even your shy look,
Even your light hand that touches carelessly
The faded ribbon in the closed-up book.

Let be; my door is closed for this one day,
Nor may morn's freshness through my window stray;
My heart is a guest-chamber, and awaits
Sorrow, a sweet shy guest from far away.

Shyly it comes from its far distant home,
O keep a silence lest its voice be dumb;
For every man that lives and laughs and loves
Must hear that whisper when his hour has come.

(Seumas O'Sullivan.)

Stanzas

"J'ai gardé ce miroir où vous êtes vue."

I HAVE kept still untroubled that clear tide
Deep wherein lay
Your image in its crystal unconcealed
A Summer's day.

For still the sleeping water, all unrest,
Stirs faintly deep;
As though some dream of that old loveliness
Troubled its sleep.

And, sweet, my heart grown sad with long desire
Holds hidden too
A memory of the swift and lovely grace
Your girlhood knew.

(Seumas O'Sullivan.)

The Gate of the Armies

SWING out thy doors, high gate that dreadst not night,
Bronze to the left and iron to the right.
Deep in a cistern has been flung thy key;
If dread thee close, anathema on thee;
And like twin shears let thy twin portals cut
The hand fist through that would thee falsely shut
Again thy dusky vault hath heard resound
Steps of strong men who never yet gave ground,
Marching with whom came breathless and came bold
Victory naked with broad wings of gold.
Her glaive to guide them calmly soars and dips;
Her kiss is life blood's purple on their lips.
From rose-round mouths the clarions shake and shrill,
A brazen boom of bees that hunt to kill.
"Drink, swarm of war, stream from your plated hives

And cull death's dust on flowery-fleshed fierce lives,
So, when back home to native town ye march,
Beneath those golden wings and my black arch
May all men watch my pavement, as each pace
Of your red feet leaves clear its sanguine trace."

(*James Elroy Flecker.*)

FRANCIS VIELÉ-GRIFFIN (1864-)

Now the Sweet Eves Are Withered

NOW the sweet eves are withered like the flowers of October
—What should we tell the willow, and the reeds, and the lagoons!—
My soul forever has grown gray and sober;
—What should we tell the dunes?

The wind arising comes without a word discreetly:
Fresh with your kisses is my brow;
The night—as mothers comfort sweetly—
Comes with a cradling kiss to greet me,
What should we tel' the willow now?

While the spring bloomed you were my King, my Poet,
You with your sweet words were the King of Hearts;
But while we two were laughing, did we know it,
That both of us were playing ancient parts?

O you and I, did either of us know it?
—Now all is gray where we would go—
We with our false and honied laughter?
What knew we of the dark times coming after?
What did we know?

There were old poems, doubtless, singing to me;
To you, old tales of fortune crowning doles;
"You love me then?—I love you!—Love me truly!"

Were we so young to laugh at our own souls!
What should we go and say now to the dunes?
What to the willow, to the reeds, lagoons?
—The moon is rising in pale aureoles—
Our hearts forgave, and died like misty moons.
(Jethro Bithell.)

ALFRED MORTIER (1865-)

I Ask You, Love

I ASK you, love, to understand but this.
For if you knew how I do love you, naught
Would shock you in my infidelities,
And you would know the reverence of my thought.

These women are not in my heart, be sure.
And you unwisely suffer, thinking I
Prefer a passing drunkenness to your
Reflective fascination, subtle, shy.

What if the body sins? Such luxury harms
The soul no whit. Despise the luring flower
Of carnal lips. Although I love your arms,
It is your soul that holds me in its power.

Your soul, a glass where candid pleasures shine,
Lute touched by mystery's seraph tenderly,
Cup of pure water still refreshing me,
When I am sickened with corrupted wine.

Dismiss the common folly of those wives
Whose mediocre pride makes them enslave
Their husbands in their narrow marriage gyves,
In memory of the maidenhead they gave.

O you my strength and weakness, you I hold
More dear. . . . My love your soul and body mixes
In a miraculous fervour which is bold
To change the postulate that custom fixes.

If I indeed loved but your loveliness,
Then we might tremble for our union . . .
More than unstable passion, we possess
The high, veridical communion.

That of two souls, more than a carnal bond,
For soul alone in hearts ferments, sublime
Folly that builds new beings far beyond
Ignoble luxuries the sport of time.

Now do you understand that my vain rut
Should leave you calm? The bonds of flesh are too
Unstable to be crimes. If I loved but
Your body, I shall not be loving you!

(Jethro Bithell.)

ANDRÉ SPIRE (1868-)

Lonely

THEY pity me.
"Look at him, see,
Taking his walking stick, and going out. So lonely.
He flees us. Look at his strange eyes.
Not even a book does he take with him. Only
His stick. What does he mean to do?
Is he intent on evil? In revolt? Or fever-sick?"

Alone, O beautiful white road,
Between your ditches full of grass and flowers,
Over your pebbles telling tales of old,
Alone, O forest, with the blue bark of your pines;
And with your wind that parleys with your trees;
And with your ants processioning that drag
Bodies of little beetles on their backs.

Alone, with you, you sun-drenched fields,
All full of cries, and noises, and heads raised alert,
Alone with you, flies, merlins, buzzards, kites,
Rocks, brambles, sources, crevices,
Fogs, clouds, mists, cones, peaks, precipices,
Heat, odor, order, chaos, and disorder,

Among the dialogues your rival mouths
Exchange for ever!
Alone with my stick, alone with my fatigue,
My dust, my throbbing temples, and my dizziness,
And the proud sweat glued to my skin.

(Jethro Bithell.)

Spring

NOW hand in hand, you little maidens, walk.
Pass in the shadow of the crumbling wall.
Arch your proud bellies under rosy aprons.
And let your eyes so deeply lucid tell
Your joy at feeling flowing into your heart
Another loving heart that blends with yours;
You children faint with being hand in hand.
Walk hand in hand, you languorous maidens, walk.
The boys are turning round, and drinking in
Your sensual petticoats that beat your heels.
And, while you swing your interlacing hands,
Tell, with your warm mouths yearning each to each,
The first books you have read, and your first kisses.
Walk hand in hand, you maidens, friend with friend.

Walk hand in hand, you lovers loving silence.
Walk to the sun that veils itself with willows.
Trail your uneasy limbs by languorous banks,
The stream is full of dusk, your souls are heavy.
You silent lovers, wander hand in hand.

(Jethro Bithell.)

To My Books

YOU, you have given me my noblest pleasures,
How many times my lips have kissed you, when I closed you, my dear books.

In you they sleep, frail seeds,
Ready to burst to life again,
The thrills of days departed.

Yes! more than my parents, much more than my masters,
More than all those I loved,
You taught me how to see the world.

Had it not been for you, I should have lived
Sensible only to the things men do.
Without you, I had been a poor barbarian,
Blind as a little child.

You have dilated all my powers of loving,
Sharpened my sadness, trained my doubt.
By you, I am no more the being of one moment.

And now, now I must take you
Into the secretest room of all the house,
And now with great seals I must seal your door;
For I will be as though you had not been.

O yes, you books of the past, now I must hide you;
For I should die cooped at your side.
For you would trouble the eyes you opened wide,
And I should feel you between me and things.

Now I must flee you, like a passioned mother
Who has given her son the suck of all her breast,
And who, in fear that some day he should cease to be her double,
Clings to him, crushing him to her violent heart.

Books, set me free! I am going away to life,
With open arms, bright eyes, and heart all new.
My senses, ardent sons of yours, shall be my only masters.
You shall be outside of me, I will disown you.
Sleep, jealous brothers, in your sombre chamber mewed;
I go, without regret, without one tear;
I go made young by my ingratitude,
Vibrating like a virgin, gladsome as a god.

(Jethro Bithell.)

Nudities

The hair is a nudity.—The Talmud.

YOU said to me: But I will be your comrade;
And visit you, but never chafe your blood;
And we will pass long evenings in your room;
Thinking of our brethren they are murdering;
And through the cruel universe we two
Will seek some country which shall give them rest.
But I shall never see your eye-balls burning,
Nor on your temples purple veins distend,—
I am your equal, I am not your prey.
For see! my clothes are chaste, and almost poor,
You see not even the bottom of my neck.

But I gave answer: Woman, thou art naked.
Fresh as a cup the hair is on thy neck;
Thy chignon, falling down, shakes like a breast;
Thy headbands are as lustful as a herd of goats. . . .
Shear thy hair.

Woman, thou art naked.
Thy naked hands rest on our open book;
Thy hands, the subtle ending of thy body,
Thy hands without a ring will touch mine by-and-bye. . . .
Mutilate thy hands.

Woman, thou art naked.
Thy singing voice mounts from thy breast;
Thy voice, thy breath, the very warmth of thy flesh,
Spreads itself on my body and penetrates my flesh. . . .
Woman, tear out thy voice.

(Jethro Bithell.)

FRANCIS JAMMES (1868-)

Amsterdam

THE pointed houses lean so you would swear
That they were falling. Tangled vessel masts
Like leafless branches lean against the sky
Amid a mass of green, and red, and rust,
Red herrings, sheepskins, coal along the quays.

Robinson Crusoe passed through Amsterdam,
(At least I think he did), when he returned
From the green isle shaded with cocoa-trees.

What were the feelings of his heart before
These heavy knockers and these mighty doors! . . .

Did he look through the window-panes and watch
The clerks who write in ledgers all day long?
Did tears come in his eyes when he remembered
His parrot, and the heavy parasol
Which shaded him in the sad and clement isle?

"Glory to thee, good Lord," he would exclaim,
Looking at chests with tulip-painted lids.
But, saddened by the joy of the return,
He must have mourned his kid left in the vines
Alone, and haply on the island dead.

I have imagined this before the shops
Which make you think of Jews who handle scales,
With bony fingers knotted with green rings.
See! Amsterdam under a shroud of snow
Sleeps in a scent of fog and bitter coal,

Last night the white globes of the lighted inns,
Whence issue heavy women's whistled calls,
Were hanging down like fruits resembling gourds.

Posters blue, red, and green shone on their walls.
The bitter pricking of their sugared beer
Rasped on my tongue and gave my nose the itch.

And in the Jewry where detritus lies,
You smell the raw, cold reek of fresh-caught fish.
The slippery flags are strown with orange-peel.
Some swollen face would open staring eyes,
A wrangling arm moved onions to and fro.

Rebecca, from your little tables you
Were selling sticky sweets, a scanty show. . . .

The sky seemed pouring, like a filthy sea,
A tide of vapor into the canals.
Smoke that one does not see, commercial calm
Rose from the husked roofs and rich table-cloths,
And from the houses' comfort India breathed.

Fain had I been one of those merchant princes,
Who sailed in olden days from Amsterdam
To China, handing over their estate
And home affairs to trusty mandatories.
Like Robinson before a notary
I would have signed my pompous procuration.

Then honesty had piled from day to day
My riches more, and flowered them like a moon-beam
Upon my laden ships' imposing prows.
And in my house the nabobs of Bombay
Would have been tempted by my florid spouse.

The Mogul would have sent a gold-ringed negro
To traffic, with a smiling row of teeth,
Under his spreading parasol. And he
Would have enchanted with his savage tales
My eldest girl, to whom he would have given
A robe of rubies cut by cunning slaves.

I should have had my family portrayed
By some poor wretch whose paintings lived and breathed:
My plump and sumptuous wife with rosy face,
My sons, whose beauty would have charmed the town,
My daughters, with their pure and different grace.

And so to-day, instead of being myself,
I should have been another, visiting
A pompous mansion of old Amsterdam,
Launching my soul before the plain devise,
Under a gable: Here lived Francis Jammes.

(*Jethro Bithell.*)

Prayer to Go to Paradise with the Asses

O GOD, when You send for me, let it be
Upon some festal day of dusty roads.
I wish, as I did ever here-below
By any road that pleases me, to go
To Paradise, where stars shine all day long.
Taking my stick out on the great highway,
To my dear friends the asses I shall say:
I am Francis Jammes going to Paradise,
For there is no hell where the Lord God dwells.
Come with me, my sweet friends of azure skies,
You poor, dear beasts who whisk off with your ears
Mosquitoes, peevish blows, and buzzing bees . . .

Let me appear before You with these beasts,
Whom I so love because they bow their head
Sweetly, and halting join their little feet
So gently that it makes you pity them.
Let me come followed by their million ears,
By those that carried paniers on their flanks,
And those that dragged the cars of acrobats,
Those that had battered cans upon their backs,
She-asses limping, full as leather-bottles,

And those too that they breech because of blue
And oozing wounds round which the stubborn flies
Gather in swarms. God, let me come to You
With all these asses into Paradise.
Let angels lead us where your rivers soothe
Their tufted banks, and cherries tremble, smooth
As is the laughing flesh of tender maids.
And let me, where Your perfect peace pervades,
Be like Your asses, bending down above
The heavenly waters through eternity,
To mirror their sweet, humble poverty
In the clear waters of eternal love.

Love

LASS, when they talk of love, laugh in their face.
They find not love who seek it far and wide.
Man is a cold, hard brute. Your timid grace
Will leave his coarse desires unsatisfied.

He only lies. And he will leave you lone
Upon your hearth with children to look after,
And you will feel so old when he reels home,
To fill the morning hours with obscene laughter.

Do not believe there is any love for the winning.
But go to the garden where the blue skies pour,
And watch, at the greenest rose-tree's dusky core,
The silver spider living alone, and spinning.

(*Jethro Bithell.*)

The Cricket's Song

LAST night the cricket sang when all was still.
I cannot tell you what he sang about.
His singing made the darkness thicker still.
The sad flame of my candle lengthened out.

Well, in the end I had to go to bed,
Telling myself with heavy heart that I
Should ne'er be happier than in days gone by,
And that this song was I, and nothing else.

Child, listen to the cricket's chirping. Thou
Hast nothing save this song to comfort thee.
But understand how deep it is, and how
It fills the heart's dark valley utterly.

Man's pain grows still in the night's silences.
Only the baker-cricket thrills thee through.
Is it a faint complaint to God? And is
The cricket's the one voice God listens to?

Hark what he sings. He sings our hard-earned bread,
And in the bitter ashes the cracked pot.
The dog asleep. The housekeeper abed.
Something sad, good, and pure, I know not what.

He says he is my friend. He says, besides,
My farmer wed his bride the other day,
And that the farm was full of love, the bride's
Heart like a blossom-scented cherry-spray.

He says that to the wedding I was fetched,
And that with solemn slowness this young pair
Showed me their room and open bride-bed where
The youngest sister of the bride was stretched.

The wedding-guests have danced and gone away.
The wife lies where her youngest sister lay.
The joy is simple in the hallowed bed.
The clock and cricket in the silence wed.

(*Jethro Bithell.*)

PAUL FORT (1872-)

A Ballad of the Season

THE sea is brown and green, and silver-flecked,
And roars as mountain-shadowed forests do.
The sky's gray velvet in the wind is checked
With pleats of pallid azure and deep blue.
A beacon-light is virginally paling
A cloud of barques to all horizons sailing,
And into their black sails the ambushed squall
Shoots silver arrows from his iron bow.

But when the sun is hatted with the squall,
And blearily above the ocean leers,
And when the cliff casts down the autumn's pall
Which, laughing, weeping, to the sun careers,
Thou, poet-fisherman, dost haste to bring
To the earth's shelter all thy mesh of string,
And waitest, dreaming, for the sovran cloud
To draw the rainbow from its velvet shroud.

(*Jethro Bithell.*)

A Ballad of the Night

THE maidens short of stature, brown of hands,
With sickles hanging from their arms like moons,
Are drinking air from night's star-studded bowl,
And wending homewards from the woods at gloam.
And when one hums another's answer comes,
And others hum, the humming goes along . . .
Can it be death wafted on ancient song?
The flickering birth of some new, radiant song?

As might a woof of mosses soft and dense,
The scented shade the deep path overbrims,
And o'er brown fields and shining bushes swims.
The shadow is like wadding under feet,

And souls uncages in deliverance, whence
Arises in the air this delicate sound
Of souls that seek each other all around,
And rob the flowers of instinct and of sense. . . .

Less dense the shadow is . . . and now is none! . . .
The moon's blue cheeks caress cheeks brown with sun,
The teeth are silvered whence this humming comes,
And silvered are the sickles hung from arms
And all that shines, and tinkles sweet, and hums,
It seems as it might be the delicate shiver,
The tender rustling of the stars' blue river,
Strayed from the ether into this deep path.

(*Jethro Bithell.*)

Philomel

O SING, in heart of silence hiding near,
Thou whom the roses bend their heads to hear!
In silence down the moonlight slides her wing:
Will no rose breathe while Philomel doth sing?
No breath—and deeper yet the perfume grows:
The voice of Philomel can slay a rose:
The song of Philomel on nights sirene
Implores the gods who roam in shades unseen,
But never calls the roses, whose perfume
Deepens and deepens, as they wait their doom.
Is it not silence whose great bosom heaves?
Listen, a rose-tree drops her quiet leaves.

Now silence flashes lightning like a storm:
Now silence is a cloud, and cradled warm
By risings and by fallings of the tune
That Philomel doth sing, as shines the moon,
—A bird's or some immortal voice from Hell?
There is no breath to die with, Philomel!
And yet the world has changed without a breath.
The moon lies heavy on the roses' death,
And every rosebush droops its leafy crown.
A gust of roses has gone sweeping down.

The panicked garden drives her leaves about:
The moon is masked: it flares and flickers out.
O shivering petals on your lawn of fear,
Turn down to Earth and hear what you shall hear.
A beat, a beat, a beat beneath the ground,
And hurrying beats, and one great beat profound.
A heart is coming close: I have heard pass
The noise of a great Heart upon the grass.
The petals reel. Earth opens: from beneath
The ashen roses on their lawn of death,
Raising her peaceful brow, the grand and pale
Demeter listens to the nightingale.

(*James Elroy Flecker.*)

Bell of Dawn

FAINT music of a bell which dawn brings to my ear, made my heart young again here at the break of day.

Faint bell-like music which through dewy dawn I hear ringing so far, so near, changed all I hope and fear.

What, shall I after this survive my dear-bought bliss, music by which my soul's far youth recovered is?

Chiming so far away, so lonely and withdrawn, O little singing air in the fresh heart of dawn,

You flee, return and ring: seeking like love to stray, you tremble in my heart here at the break of day.

Ah, can life ever be of such serenity, so peaceful, mild and fair as is this little air?

So simple yet so sweet as, over meadows borne, this little tune that thrills all the fresh heart of morn?

(Ludwig Lewisohn.)

Pan and the Cherries

I RECOGNIZED him by his skips and hops,
And by his hair I knew that he was Pan.
Through sunny avenues he ran,
And leapt for cherries to the red tree-tops.
Upon his fleece were pearling water drops
Like little silver stars. How pure he was!

And this was when my spring was arched with blue.

Now, seeing a cherry of a smoother gloss,
He seized it, and bit the kernel from the pulp.
I watched him with great joy. . . . I came anigh. . . .

He spat the kernel straight into my eye.
I ran to kill Pan with my knife!
He stretched his arm out, swirled—
And the whole earth whirled!

Let us adore Pan, god of the world!

(Jethro Bithell.)

The Sailor's Song

I LOVED the mother, and I loved the daughter. He sails for many a month, does sailor Jack. I loved the mother when I left her; I loved the daughter, too, when I came back.

One woman is as good as any other! When I set sail I had the bloomin' blues. When I came back we all went on the booze. The mother's dead, the daughter is a mother.

A sailor sails for months and months, my dears. Hello, it's time this tar was on the water. Now, mammy, keep a sharp eye on yer daughter. I'm coming back for her in fifteen years.

(Jethro Bithell.)

CHARLES GUÉRIN (1873-1907)

Partings

O TRAGIC hours when lovers leave each other!
Then every mistress feels herself a mother,
And, making of her lap a chair of ease,
Cradles us in the hollow of her knees,
And turns aside her brimful, dreaming eyes,
And with brief voice to our vain vows replies,
And hums a tune, and whispers, and at whiles
Smooths with slow, gliding hand our hair, and smiles
As laughs a babe to angels over him.
In her strange eyes her heart's dark sorrows swim;
Convulsively her arms strain us to her;
She moans and trembles, and, with sudden stir,
Presses her lips upon our eyes, and bids
Silence, and drinks our soul through closed eye-lids.

(*Jethro Bithell.*)

Vain Vows

THIS winter night is odorous of spring.
Dreaming, my casement open wide I fling.
Upon a veil of silk the wind seems flying.
A dog barks, and the scented pines are sighing.
The silence is an urn that every noise
Falls into. O my heart yearns for the joys
Of those who in this tender night-hour fling
Their casements open to this whiff of spring,
And gaze up to the sky, and, drinking space,
Taste all infinity while they embrace.
Their drunken souls soar to the stars in flight:
"How beautiful," they breathe, "is life to-night!"
And the wind wafts caresses o'er their hair.

Sweet melancholy of a loving pair,
Wherein the virgin whom her lover strains
Yields like a lily overwhelmed with rains!

Such melancholy I remember well
And bitterly, and the firm vows that fell
From lips that sealed my own. With a slow wing
The gentle night was o'er us hovering.
My darling, you were sighing, tired I was.
And we were silent, love spoke long. Alas!

(*Jethro Bithell.*)

The Journey's End

AT the road's end
The sun goes down;
Give me your hand,
And give me your mouth.

This spring is as black
As a faithless heart;
I am thirsty, give me
Your tears to drink.

O dusk from above!
The angelus rings;
Give me the love
That your breasts tremble with.

The road descends,
White ribbon of leagues,
The last, long slope
Of the blue hills.

Now stay, and look
At yonder trees,
And the smoking roofs
Where a village dreams:

For I will there
In the porchways sleep,
Among your hair
Full of withered leaves.

(*Jethro Bithell.*)

The Delicate Evening

THE delicate evening, with its clear, blue mist,
Dies like a word of love on summer's lips,
Or like the wet, warm smile of widows, who
Dream in their flesh of olden bridal joys.
The city far away has hushed its noise;
In the grave garden where the silence blooms
The warm, nocturnal wind discreetly sprays
The fountain freshness o'er the graveled ways,
O'er which like rustling foliage dresses trail;
The hum of wasps sounds low, and roses, shed
By thoughtful fingers, languorously spread
Their soul of honey stirring love; a pale,
Strange dawn roves round the confines of the sky,
And blends in mystic, immaterial charm
The fleeing radiance with the starry dark.

What share in all the suns to be have I,
In love, youth, genius, gold, and fiery strife! . . .
O let me fall into a long sleep now,
Sleep, with a woman's hands upon my brow:
And close the window opened there on life!

(*Jethro Bithell.*)

CHARLES VILDRAC (1882-)

After Midnight

IT is at morning, twilight they expire;
Death takes in hand, when midnight sounds,
Millions of bodies in their beds,
And scarcely anybody thinks of it. . . .

O men and women, you
About to die at break of day,
I see your hands' uneasy multitude,
Which now the blood deserts for ever!

White people in the throes of death,
Wrestling in all the world to-night,
And whom the weeping dawn will silence,
Fearful I hear your gasping breath!

How many of you there are dying!
How can so many other folks be lying
Asleep upon the shore of your death-rattles!

. . . Here is noise in the house;
I am not the only one who hears you:
Some one has stepped about a room,
Some one has risen to watch over you. . .

But no! It is a little song I hear.
If some one stepped about a room,
It was to go and rock a little child,
Who has been born this evening in the house.

(Jethro Bithell.)

Commentary

HERE, before me, the lamp, the paper;
And behind me this troubled day
Passed in myself
Following the hundred turns and twistings of my thoughts.

Trying to justify our steps,
And then my steps,
Trying to find my starting-place
Upon my route's confusing plan. . . .

And now, before this paper,
And now, in this my house,
I am still in myself,
And stifling there.

O the great resonant rôles
That all this day I have repeated,

And which, because I can no more improve them,
Now I am going to set down
In my most learnèd eloquence!

Ah my first rôles, costumed in pride,
Moulded in love and bravery,
How they are wearied and humiliated
In this my "theatre in my arm-chair;"
How they would like to go out just a little into the street!

O all of you whom I resemble,
Have you no pity on us?
What pure poets we are:
In the warm museum of our chamber,
Our navel marks the centre,
And we examine our own ashes
Behind our bolts.

What pure poets we are,
O we collectors of our fevers,
Who "bring out" our copies of them,
And run, on winter evenings,
To listen to what people say of us!

What pure poets, what pure poets . . .
There are mad oceans far away,
And mad skies, and mad sails,
There are mad vessels far away:
We talk of these in the fine weather,
Leaning at our window.

O you, what men are we?
We are attired in black,
We go to our work,
And when the weather is not very certain,
We take our umbrella.

I am tired of interior movements!
I am tired of interior departures!

And of heroism with the strokes of a pen,
And of a beauty all in formulas.

I am ashamed of lying to my work,
And that my work should lie unto my life,
And of being able to accommodate myself,
While burning aromatics,
And of the musty odour reigning here. . . .

. . . . . .

Water stagnating, in a pool's dark belly pent,
Water which greens at the soiled heart of old fountains,
Hides in its breast a life intense,
Quivers with being populous with beasts,
And with the long and languid dream of grasses;
It feels the fermentation of the living mud
Whose rotting in slow bubbles it exhales;

But it is blind and does not know the sky,
For death has sheeted it with withered leaves:
It cannot see save what it harbours;

But mute this water is, and cannot sing,
Nor laugh nor murmur like the sea and rivers:
And to itself can only strain a long-drawn echo;
But it is dead, and cannot roam,
And cannot run and leap and glitter,
Caressing quays and boats,
And cannot go to the embrace of mills;
And cannot contemplate save life in its own self.
It is inhabited by life and lives not,
Even as is inhabited by life and lives not,
The inert life of corpses. . . .

And I should like to make come out of me,
To make a poem with, my steps,
Taking or no my pen to witness,
Taking or no my fellow-men to witness,
And I should like . . .

The stagnant water, too, would like. . . .

(Jethro Bithell.)

An Inn

IT is an inn there is
At the cross-roads of Chétives-Maisons,
In the land where it is always cold.

Two naked highroads cross.
They never saw the garnering of harvests,
They go beyond the sky-line, very far.
These are the cross-roads of Chétives-Maisons.

There are three cottages,
In the same corner cowering, all the three,
Two of them are uninhabited.

The third one is this inn with heart so sad!
They give you bitter cider and black bread,
Snow wets the weeping fire, the hostess is
A forlorn woman with a smile so sad.

Only the very thirsty drink in it,
Only the very weary there will sit.
And never more than one or two together,
And no one needs to tell his story there.

And he who enters there with chattering teeth,
Sits down without a sound on the bench's edge,
Stretches his chin a little forward,
And lays his hands flat on the table.
One cannot think that there is flesh
In his stiff, heavy clogs;
His sleeves are short, and show
His wrists whose bone makes a red bowl;
And he has eyes like a beaten beast's,
And obstinately stares at empty space.

He eats his bread with leisure,
Because his teeth are worn;
He cannot drink with pleasure,
Because his throat is full of pain.

When he has finished,
He hesitates, then timidly
Goes to sit, a little while,
At the fireside.

His cracked hands marry
The hard embossments of his knees.
His head inclines and drags his neck,
His eyes are ever scared at empty space.

His grief begins to dream, to dream,
And weighs upon his nape and eye-lashes,
And one by one makes wrinkles on his face,
While from the fire comes delicately clear
A new-born baby's weeping, far away.

And now a little girl he had not seen,
Comes from the corner where she sat;
A delicate and pretty little girl.

She has a woman's eyes,
Eyes widened suddenly with tears.

And now she comes anear him, very gently,
And comes to lean upon the stranger's hand
The tender flesh of her mouth;
And lifts to him her tear-filled eyes,
And reaches him, with all her delicate body,
A little flower of winter which she has.

And now the man sobs, sobs,
Holding in awkward hands
The little maiden's hand and flower.

. . . . . .

The forlorn woman with the smile so sad,
Who has been dumb and watching this,
Begins, as though she dreamed, to speak,
Begins to speak with far-departed eyes:

"A man came here who was not one of us. . . .
He was not old with poverty and pain, as we are,
He was as sons of queens may be, perhaps,
And yet how like he seemed to one of us!
And no man ever spoke to me as he did,
Although he only asked to sit and drink;
He leaned his elbows on the middle of the table,
And all the time he stayed I looked at him;

And when he rose, I could not help but cry,
He was so like the one I loved when I was sixteen years. . . .

He was opening the door,
To go back into the wind,
But when I told him why
The tears were in my eyes,
He shut the door again.

And all that evening, all that night,
His eyes and voice caressed me,
My folded pains, he stretched them out,
And spite of his young years and of my chilly bed,
Spite of my empty breasts and hollow shoulders,
He stayed a whole day long to love me, yes, he loved me. . . .

And then this little girl was born
Of the alms of love he gave me. . . ."

(Jethro Bithell.)

GEORGES DUHAMEL (1884-)

The Beggar

YOU cannot gather up my look, which flows
Towards the earth, and which you seek in vain;
Friend, let it weigh down, and yourself be silent,
I have no wish nor strength to look at you.

You come to me, as men come near a hearth,
Frightened by the hush of your domain,

Preyed on by poverty and pain . . .
But, just to-day, I know not what to give you,
I surely cannot give you what you ask.

Then you speak, accuse yourself,
You make your weakness more, you bare yourself before me,
Lessen yourself, in hope
That I shall with a word restore your stature,
Make you bound upwards to the height you had,
Console you, and protest,
—With but one word, like a caress,

With but one word, though whispered.—
You shrink, you grovel on the ground,
You say yourself more lamentable than you are,
To force me to bend down and raise you up.
—One does this for the puniest stranger,
I could not fail to do it . . . you are sure?—

. . . You dig your past up with a pitiless hand,
Confessing wrongs that you have done to me
Which I had no idea you had done,
Denying with uneasy, fainting voice,
All your mind's best.

But vainly you are looking for my eyes . . .
I am tired, do you not know it?
O! say no more! for I would give a day of joy
To have the courage, friend, to throw to you
The word which should restore your strength and stature.

But, friend, the more your voice shakes and the more you
lower yourself,
The more the wish of speaking to you flees from me,
And because you are a man, because I love you,
I long to weep at all I hear you say.

(Jethro Bithell.)

JULES ROMAINS (1885-)

The Barracks

Beings have molten forms and lives together.

THE sunshine cannot make the barracks glad.
Its seeming happiness is real pain;
The building faces to the East; anigh
Its girdle, forests, fields, and gardens lie;
Then the horizon furbished by the dawn.

The whitewashed parget walls seems to receive
Only the purest rays that light contains.
The red tiles give the roof a youthful look,
The sanded court is opened like a flower.

And yet the handsome building is in pain.

The clock has just struck eight. This is the hour
When, in the mighty cities far away,
A rustling of glad bodies fills the morn,
Of men that from the girdle inwards crowd,
Scattered no more by isolating sleep.
A fluid multitude swells streets like veins,
And enters into offices and works.

Shop-windows glass the haste of passers-by;
The omnibuses grate, the chimneys smoke;
Men are connected by chaotic rhythms,
Keen groups are born, and swarm, and are transformed.
Awakened muscles willingly are strong,
Life pours as from a bent, full bottle's neck.

The barracks suffer, wishing back the night.
The soldiers fain would sleep into the dawn,
To be themselves still longer in the dark,
Nestling their liberty in crinkled sheets.

The clarion's panting cries compel the barracks
Once more to don its single, dolorous soul.
Giving to arms no time to stretch themselves,
To hearts no time to glide out of their dreams,
The barracks sets its forces galloping,
And whips at sluggish flanks that hate the lash,
Rest, silence, and the friendship of the dark,
Are with a single impulse thrust outside,
For these impurities would weigh down limbs
Which may not have, until the day is done,
One nerve inactive nor one muscle lax.
The barracks hurries, but the hours are sacks
Too narrow, from too supple leather cut
To hold the heap of movements and of acts
With which it seeks to stuff them, out of breath.

Behind the walls
The vegetating fields lie pensively.
The plants, sure they have time, by slow degrees
Work out their shape, and in themselves unite
The joy of being spreading like a lake,
The joy of growing flowing like a river.
And every time the barracks gazes thither,
It bustles less and feels it is in pain.

Bent soldiers scrub the wooden floors of rooms;
Their backs will have lumbago, arms the cramp.
One was a farm-hand, and remembers now
The music of the scythe in grass of June.
This fair-haired fellow, panting down the stairs,
Is thinking of a little Town-Hall office
With windows o'er a yellow, dozing square;
He used to sit in a cane-bottomed chair,
With glossy paper round his pen, that threw
Upon the left a fibre of blue shadow.
Mud clots the corridors, for yesterday
Was rainy; those who sweep are wearied out;
Others that on the stairheads squat or stand
Are scraping boots while sweat is on their brows.

The traveller who climbs a wooden hill,
And, with his foot upon the highest stone,
Upon it pedestals his lonely frame,
To see the forest and to breathe its breath,
Resumes, for one grave second, in himself
The sap, the sprouting, and the scent of trees;
And if, in all the underwood, one twig
Rises above its clog and sharply cracks;
If strawberries ripen, sheltered by a bush,
One whiff of odour, and one flake of sound
Lost in the smell and rustling of the trees,
Run to the traveller's wide-opened brain
Wherein collected all the forest thinks.

Thus raised more high than any peak of souls,
With effort freed from the entanglement
Wherein its branching passions cross and toss,
And covered with unconsciousness, this dew
Which dropped above the barracks when it passed
The dark, dense flesh that does not know itself,
Already vast but undecided still,
The conscience of the barracks,
From hearts dissimulated among things
Receives the feeble breath their essence scents,
And bids the little griefs sent up by men
Be seated in a corner of its grief,
That they may say in two words what they are,
And what complaints they bear.

This conscience probes the tender epidermis,
Yea, and the final folds of human matter,
Even as a hand that warms and fills a glove.
And, timidly, in places, sees the chiefs
Like scattered seeds of lead within itself.

And then it hears no longer little griefs.
A great wind drowns their wearisome falsetto;
The ardent sex of men begins to cry;
Desires of males in cage calls out for females;

The soldiers sing, roar, jostle, violate
The air. Their arms seek softer arms to knead.
Furious at having nothing to embrace
Save other stiffened arms that do not yield,
Furious at never finding anywhere
The soft white bodies that are needed for
The barracks to be soothed and have its flesh
In couples equilibrated, they kindle
A fire of frenzied gestures, and their kisses,
Waste cartridges cast in the flame, explode.

And now a locomotive far away
Buries a whistle in the womb of space.
It is rebellion's signal; the clear order
The strength of trains darts unto men's, that they
May break the threads which make them gravitate
Round the same motionless and hated centre,
And from this turning sling escape, and pierce
Their duty like the paper in a hoop,
And the vast soaring rolled in them unfold,
And go away,
And o'er the horizon find their own horizon.

Fain were the barracks to dissolve and die.
There is a breath glides through the soldiers' bodies,
Moving, disjoining, elevating them.
The enormous block seems porous. All its lives
From one another's hold tear to depart.
It was a serried fleet of sailing-ships;
But the wind whips them and the masts have cracked,
The ships are scattered broadcast on the sea.

O to set out! The soldiers stamp to go.
Their hope, tiptoe with expectation, tries
To see beforehand the miraculous hour
When all compulsion shall be reaped like hay.
And rude hands weigh the future, feel the months,
And count the days. And on partitions they
In trembling numbers carve how many more.

By all its men the barracks fain would die.

O this were death delicious as pure water,
If one could be dissolved, and pulverised,
And hurled in ruins by self-hate, without
One atom weeping the dead unity,
And not one being clinging to the warmth
Of living in the rhythm of the whole,
Without the unity bewailing its conscience,
O beautiful death!

But not in this way shall the barracks die.
First in its leaded coffin it must live.
The State decrees it must exist, endure!
Feeds it with dole of food from day to day,
And fills it yearly with new sap of youth.

Then, one morning, war.

The barracks, that knows nothing,
Shall nothing know. It will be told
To glide out of its walls,
To march, to follow a road,
To get inside a black train.

And later, not much later,
Not knowing where the carriages
Have taken it to;
Knowing nothing of all, except
That it must kill;
Lying flat on its belly,
Leaping like a grasshopper,
Wishing to live now with a frenzied wish,
In mud, and smoke, and din,
Bleeding, raging, thinned,
It will go and will be killed
By canons.

And this presentiment makes weapons shine;
It spreads a gloss of phosphorus over them;
The muskets reared in line shine with it so

The soldiers have not for them that kind look
With which you soothe the back of things familiar,
But cast them glances grating on the steel.
The barracks sees that it is filled choke-full
Of muskets, bayonets, and cartridges.
There are erected muskets in the racks,
And in the cellars and the garrets too.
And this swarms germinating in the barracks;
This is the seed! The barracks knows her sex.
She is prolific. And she carries, like
A heavy ovary which throbs and swells,
Millions of future deaths within her womb.

The trains may whistle. What if she forget!
She has her flesh and her fatality.
Fated she is to kill and to be killed.

(Jethro Bithell.)

The Church

The self-deceit of having wrought the light.

PEOPLE arrive to worship in their church.
Though it is getting tired and insecure,
The monument can make a gathering yet
With people poured into it by the roads.
It sifts them as they enter through its porch,
And gently it removes from each the thoughts
Which might not melt so well as all the rest,
Replacing them by others left behind
By those who came to Mass in days of old.

The crowd which tramples on the flags outside
Bears nosegays of ideas new and bright;
The fresh dreams of to-day spread over them,
Rosy and blue as sunshades which in their
Own manner dye the radiance of the sky.

Inside there are no nosegays and no sunshades.

The naves and aisles are overflowing with
A crowd the pillars intimately know,
Their contact is as ancient as the church,
And every summer Sunday when the sun
Begins to lick the windows by one edge,
And in the winter of discoloured lamps,
For centuries this crowd has been reborn
On every following Sunday still the same.

Women and men are entering in file.

The crowd is borne in haste by all the doors,
Rumbling an instant, ordered, then appeased;
It has not changed its shape; it is already
Moulded unto the contours of the walls;
Faithfully bodies lean on the same chairs.
Now it is born again while ring the bells.

But the dark power
That gives it life
On the seventh day
Of every week,
Softens at last
Like an old spring,
Little by little
Born less far
From death.

It is a group
Worn out with use
Whose flesh grows flabby.
And in the winter
It is cold
Under the roof.
In olden days,
In the city

It was the greatest of unanimous beings,
And all the city was transfused in it.

But now the worshops have arisen,
The workshops full of youth!
They live in ardour.
Their smoke soars higher than the sound of bells.
They do not fear to hide the sun,
For their machines make sunshine.

Like a dog that comes out of a pool and sneezes,
The workshop shivering scatters round it drops
Of energy that wake the town to life.

But the senile group
Sprouts not with bristling
Wires and cables.
No electricity
Rustles from it
To countless houses.

It is feeble,
Its chinks are stopped,
It is gathered in.

But it preserves with pride its fixed idea:
Others may swell with sap and ramify;
And shadow with a foliage of green forces
All the massed houses;
The humble group would tenderly, heart to heart,
Speak to the infinite group benevolent words.
For it is sure a soul stands o'er the world.

It knows God's finger painlessly from Heaven
Leads the leash of natural forces;
That God sees all, and that His tender eyes
Wrap up the form and penetrate the essence
Of things.
The group is sure of it.
But fears
Lest having to keep watch o'er all these minds
And bodies, all these angels, beasts, and deaths,

Ant-hills, cities, forests,
Planets and planetary systems,
God see no more the little auditory
Which listens to the Mass in pillared shade.

It calls Him; makes to Him the holy signs.
In olden days God taught His creatures words
Which force Him to give heed and to vouchsafe.

The group that mumbles them knows not their meaning,
But knows the priest before the altar knows:
The illuminated summit of the group.

Upon the murmurs serving it as rollers
Slowly the common thought advances, like
A boat that fishers launch into the sea;
And onward floats the thought to God.

From hearts the fervour passes to the walls,
The rising fluid magnetizes
The steeple, and the steeple brings down God.

God approaches, God descends;
He is quite near; the air
Weighs heavier.
Something compresses, heats it;
The choir is filled with incense
So that, arriving, God
Shall find here clouds
Like those He dwells in,
And feel less strange.

He is quite near, quite near. You can whisper to Him,
Tell Him what you would dare tell no man, ask Him
For anything you like. And even if God
Refuse, He is so good you cannot vex Him.

"O God in Heaven, vouchsafe to cure my leg!
Matter burst from it yesterday.—My God,

Vouchsafe to fill my shop with customers!
—Help me to find out if my servant John
Is robbing me!—O God, cure my sore eyes!
—Save me, my God, from getting drunk so often!
—Lord, let my son pass his examination!
He is so shy. Thou shalt have a great big candle.
—Help me to make her fall in love with me,
I will put ninepence in St. Anthony's box.
—My God! if only I could get some work!
—He makes a martyr of me. Let him die!
—My God, my God, I am certain I am pregnant;
O let the child go rotten in my belly."

It is like a hamlet at the hour of noon.
On every soul's hearth they have kindled fire,
Which casts its smoke and yields it to the wind.
God sees the bluish prayers climb up to Him.

They are a perfume which delight Him. He
Comes nearer. The crowd rises, touches Him.
Their longing to caress serves them for arm.
They seize on God to press Him close to them;
To be alone and to possess Him all.

This morning, God, the conscience of the universe,
Has from the universe withdrawn, like blood
Out of a bull's limbs bleeding at the head.
All the world's soul, the whole of God is here;
The church is the glad vase that gathers Him.

God now can think but of the little crowd;
The things they wish He too must wish, since He
In them is incarnated and their breath.

Then in the mystical certitude;
Drunk with alcohol
Hid in the organ notes,
The light of the rose-window,
And the stained glass;

Clad with incense like
A scented sleep that bends and swoons;
By old, magnetic rites
Plunged in hypnotic sleep
Whence mount, like bubbles
Crossing stagnant waters,
Memories and mouldiness
And age-old madness;
Forgetting that beyond these walls
There is the town, and earth,
And then infinity;
The group so old, so little,
Which withers, which is scarce alive,
Dreams aloud that it is God.

(Jethro Bithell.)

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